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THE COMPLETE WORKS *of*

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

Volume VIII

Avatar

Jettatura

The Water Pavilion

A History of Romanticism

The Progress of French Poetry

Translated and Edited by

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AVATAR

Introduction

THE mysterious, the weird, the ghostly, the occult are conspicuously absent from the works of the Classicists, especially of those who furnished fiction to the generation to which the earlier Romanticists belonged. Partly for this reason, partly because the adherents of the new school were resolved to do in all things the very opposite of what was done by their adversaries and contemners, and largely because of the influence of German and English literature upon minds already prepared for the reception of novelties, however startling and unusual, most of the writers of the Romanticist school indulged freely in stories of mystery and awe. Victor Hugo had written "Han d'Islande," a gruesome and melodramatic tale, the hero of which, a dwarf, of course, drank the blood of his foes out of their own skulls. He had introduced another ghastly

personage of the same family in his "Notre-Dame;" and in his "Rhine," a series of letters of travel, he had inserted a legend constructed upon the most approved mediæval principles, and intended to make the blood of the reader run cold and his hair stand up straight upon his head, — an effect that was undoubtedly attained in the case of thousands of admirers of the author, and of countless readers who knew him by name only.

As it was found to be comparatively easy, in those days of vigorous Romanticism, to move by such means, all the apparatus employed by Shakespeare and by the Germans was turned to account by the enthusiastic French writers of the marvellous. If it be recollected that all this fable and legend and mystery had the further advantage of leaving a perfectly clear field to the imagination of the writer, it will readily be understood how this particular form of fiction came to be so generally adopted by the Romanticists, one of whose cardinal principles it was that art must be absolutely free, or, in other words, that the writer, whether poet, novelist, or dramatist, should be absolutely unfettered both in the choice of his subject and in the manner in which he chose to treat it.

Again, the passion for local colour was often responsible for extraordinary tales and marvellously fantastic poems. An instance of this is found in the second tale included in this volume. "Jettatura" is in great part the result of Gautier's desire to render the superstition of the South in all its vigour and all its consequences; to present it as it strikes a stranger, previously unacquainted with it, but who, through the force of circumstances, soon gets to believe what those around him believe. And it must be owned, even by prejudiced readers, that this result had been fully attained by Gautier. He has certainly succeeded in impressing his public with the sensation of the South, and in making intelligible the superstition that has so fast a hold upon the inhabitants of Naples.

Of course, innumerable logical objections at once occur to the dispassionate reader, to the man who refuses to yield to the spell that Gautier would cast upon him. The sequence of events is not irreproachable, and there are unmistakable weaknesses here and there that a careful modern writer, trained in the school of Realism, would have avoided, but the main object is attained: the superstition is explained and the interest of the reader is secured.

In each of the two tales, "Avatar" and "Jettatura," the position of the author and the reader is identical with that of the dramatist and the spectator of a melodrama. Provided the spectator is willing to allow the dramatist perfect liberty of action and will consent to forego his right of criticism, the playwright will undertake to produce a combination of scenes and situations that shall move, excite, and interest the spectator and keep him breathless from the rising of the curtain unto the going down of the same. So with these stories: grant Gautier what he asks, and what it is reasonable he should ask, in view of the particular form of intellectual and emotional entertainment sought by his reader, and he will accomplish what he undertakes to do — to keep one entertained and interested. And what more can be desired? — especially when it is borne in mind that he was writing these tales for publication in a daily newspaper that required of him spicy entertainment for a constituency composed mainly of the detested bourgeois class, which in all countries at the present day still revels in the sensational and cares little or nothing for the psychological or the reasonable.

Thus, while one may fairly object to the peculiar resolution taken by Paul d'Aspremont to blind himself

in order that he may not destroy by his glances the woman he loves, though he first and foremost looks at her hard enough and long enough to annihilate her on the spot; while one may wonder at the extraordinary rapidity with which the death of the girl is brought about, and may feel not unreasonable incredulity at the terrific portents and phenomena that preface and accompany the suicide of the hero, yet all these things are perfectly consistent with the general idea of the story, and quite in accord with the particular system of fiction that obtained so largely at that period.

Almost equally startling is the tale of metempsychosis which Gautier has entitled "Avatar." Almost, not quite, for there can be no doubt in the mind of any sane reader that in this story Gautier is not attempting to relate any actual occurrence, but merely to give free play to his fancy, while in "Jettatura" there is evident a desire to convince the reader of the truth of the events narrated. But "Avatar" is really more interesting and more artistic, though the stage-setting is uncommonly fanciful, and the plot extravagant. There is in this story a really clever situation, which the author has most happily saved. The mere transference of the soul of one man to the body of another is not in

itself a novelty in fiction, and apart from the possible comical or tragical mistakes to which it may give rise, is not startlingly novel. But, owing to the motive which Gautier has invented to account for the transference in the case of Octavius and the husband of the woman he loves, a new element of interest and disquietude enters into the story. As a matter of fact, it is not with Octavius and his mad passion for that *rara avis* in Romanticist literature — a perfectly pure and absolutely chaste woman — nor with the angry and helpless Labinski that one is concerned, but with the Countess herself, the unconscious victim of the hideous plot laid by the old French doctor and Octavius. Here was indeed a dramatic situation, and one that might well lead to most unpleasant results, which, however, a modern Realist would not have hesitated to bring about, and to describe with fullest wealth of epithet and crude phrase. Gautier has admirably saved the situation and won a triumph for himself in the clever scene in which the Countess, alarmed by the hot glance of Octavius-Labinski, so skilfully and so wittily avoids the apparently inevitable. It was a delicate subject to handle, and Gautier has handled it like a master.

INTRODUCTION

"The Water Pavilion" is a graceful exotic fancy, in which the author sought to exhibit his mastery of local colour, so much in vogue among the Romanticists, rather than a story in the ordinary meaning of the word. It would scarcely be an exaggeration to say that the love incidents in themselves are chiefly used for the purpose of bringing out the peculiarities of Chinese education and Chinese manners. The description of the Water Pavilion itself is one of those delicate bits that Gautier alone can manage with complete success, and the other delightful picture, that of the two young people first becoming aware of each other's existence, suffices to account for the prolonged popularity of this particular story of Gautier's.

"The Water Pavilion" was the first published, for it appeared in 1846 in the September number of the *Musée des familles*, and six years later in the volume entitled "The Tiger Skin," being finally included, in 1863, in "Novels and Tales." "Jettatura" saw the light in the columns of the *Moniteur universel*, coming out in instalments between the end of June and the end of July, 1856. It bore then the title "Paul d'Aspremont," but had been advertised three years before under the name "The Jettatore," and when it was

subsequently published in book form, in 1857, it assumed its present title, which has ever since been retained. "Avatar" also came out in the columns of the *Moniteur universel*, in 1856, and was republished in book form in the course of the following year.

Avatar

AVATAR

I

OCTAVIUS DE SAVILLE was slowly dying of a mysterious disease, which baffled every one. He was not bedridden; he led his usual life; nor did a complaint ever escape him, but he was visibly wasting away. To the inquiries of the physicians whom his anxious relatives and friends insisted upon his consulting, he answered that he felt no particular pain, and the medical men failed to discover in him any alarming symptoms. The auscultation of his chest resulted in a satisfactory sound, and scarce could a too slow or too rapid beating of the heart be noted when the ear was applied to that organ. He did not cough, he had no fever, yet life was leaving him through one of the numerous leaks of which, according to Terentius, the human frame is full.

Sometimes a strange syncope would make him turn pale and cold as marble. For a moment or two he looked like a dead man, then the pendulum, released

by the mysterious finger that had held it back, resumed its swing, and Octavius seemed to awake as out of a dream. He had been sent to drink the waters, but the nymphs of the streams had been powerless to help him. Nor did a trip to Naples prove more efficacious; its glorious sun, so much bepraised, had seemed to him as dark as that in Albrecht Dürer's engraving; the bat that bears on its wing the single word, *Melancholia*, flapped its dusty membranes in the azure heavens and fluttered between him and the light. On the Mergellina Quay, where the half nude lazzaroni cook themselves in the sunshine and impart a bronze patina to their skins, he had shivered with cold.

He had, therefore, returned to his little apartment in the Rue Saint-Lazare, and, to all outward appearance, had resumed his former habits.

The apartment was as comfortably furnished as it is possible for a bachelor's home to be; but as dwellings gradually assume the aspect, and perchance even acquire the thoughts, of their inhabitants, Octavius' rooms had gradually become duller: the damask of the curtains had faded and a gray light alone filtered through it. The great clumps of peonies were withering on the white ground of the carpet, itself dingier; the gilding

of the frames of a few water-colour paintings and of sketches by distinguished artists had slowly reddened under the implacable dust; the fire, discouraged, was dying out and smoking amid the ashes. The old Boulle clock, inlaid with brass and tortoise-shell, attenuated the sound of its ticking, and the chimes struck the weary hours softly as in a sick chamber. The doors closed noiselessly, and the footsteps of the few visitors were deadened by the thick Wilton carpet. Laughter stopped of itself as one entered these cold, dark, gloomy rooms, where, nevertheless, reigned the fullest modern luxury. John, Octavius' valet, glided through them like a shadow, his duster under his arm, for, unwittingly impressed by the melancholy atmosphere of the place, he had ended by losing his loquacity. On the walls hung trophies composed of boxing-gloves, masks, and foils, but it was plain that they had not been used for a long time. On the tables and other pieces of furniture lay books taken up and then thrown away carelessly, as though Octavius had sought to lull some fixed thought by mechanical reading. A letter begun, but the paper of which had grown yellow, seemed to have been awaiting completion for some months past, and lay like a mute reproach upon the centre of the desk. The

apartment looked deserted though it was inhabited; life had withdrawn from it, and on entering it one was met by a puff of cold air such as issues from a vault when it is opened.

In this gloomy abode, where never the tip of a woman's boot ventured, Octavius was happier than anywhere else. The silence and solitude suited him; the joyous bustle of life, in which he occasionally endeavoured to take part, repelled him; he returned more sombre than ever from the masquerades, the evening parties and the suppers to which his friends took him. He had, therefore, ceased to struggle against his mysterious suffering and let the days slip by with the indifference of a man who no longer reckons on the morrow. He formed no plans, for he no longer believed in the future, and having tacitly handed in to God his resignation of life, he waited for its acceptance. But it would be a mistake to suppose that his face was hollowed and thin, that his complexion was wan, his limbs worn out, or that he was outwardly wasted away; scarcely did a few brown marks show under the eyes, an orange tint around them, and a slight wrinkling on the blue-veined temples. What was lacking was the sparkle of the eye, whence will, hope, and desire had

fled. The dead glance in the young face formed a strange contrast and produced a more painful impression than the worn features and the feverish eyes that mark the ordinary invalid.

Before falling into this wasting sickness Octavius had been, and indeed yet was, what is called a handsome young fellow. He had thick black hair, that curled richly and fell silky and lustrous on either side of his temples. His eyes, large, velvety, of a dark blue like that of night, fringed with curling lashes, sometimes flashed with a moist glance; when they were at rest and not animated by passion, they were noticeable for the serene quiet characteristic of Orientals indulging in the kieff at the door of a Smyrna or a Constantinople café, after they have smoked their narghileh. He had never had much colour and his complexion resembled those olive-coloured Southern faces that gain their full value in artificial light only. His hands were small and delicate; his feet narrow and well-shaped. He dressed well, without being ahead of the fashion of the day or behind it either, and knew perfectly how to bring out to the full his natural advantages. Although he did not pretend to be a dandy or a gentleman-rider, he would not have been refused at

the Jockey Club had he chosen to become a candidate for election.

How was it, then, that young, handsome, rich, and with so much cause to be happy, this young man was wasting away so wretchedly? It may be supposed that Octavius was blasé, that the fashionable novels of the day had filled him with their unhealthy notions, that he had ceased to believe in anything, that of his youth and his wealth, squandered in riotous living, naught was left him but debts, but all this was far from the truth. Octavius could not be sated with pleasure, for he had tasted it but little; he was neither splenetic nor atheistic, neither romantic nor a libertine nor a spendthrift; up to this time his life had been given partly to study and partly to enjoyment, like the lives of other young fellows. In the morning he attended the lectures at the Sorbonne, and in the evening he took his stand on the stairs at the Opera to watch the stream of dresses. He was not known to be the lover of a Marble Heart or of a duchess, and he spent his income without allowing his fancies to trench upon his capital. His lawyer thought well of him, so that he was a non-eccentric person, quite incapable of hurling himself down a precipice like Manfred, or of asphyxiating him-

self like d'Escousse. But as regards the cause of the singular state into which he had fallen, I dare not confess it, so improbable is it in Paris in the nineteenth century, and I therefore leave it to my hero to tell it himself.

As ordinary physicians could make nothing of this strange disease of his, the dissection of souls not being yet undertaken in medical schools, recourse was had in the last resort to a queer physician, who had returned from the East Indies after a long stay in those regions and who had the reputation of performing wonderful cures. Octavius, feeling that this physician was endowed with an extraordinary perspicacity that would enable him to divine his secret, dreaded the doctor's visit, and it was only in deference to the reiterated requests of his mother that he consented to receive Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau.

When the physician entered, Octavius was lying on a divan, a pillow supporting his head, another under his elbow, and a third on his feet. He was wrapped up in the soft warm folds of a gandoura, and reading, or rather holding a book, for his glance, though it rested on a page, was elsewhere. His face was pale, but, as I have already said, did not exhibit any marked

change. A superficial observer would not have believed the young patient to be in danger, for on the table at his side was a box of cigars instead of the vials, lotions, potions, herb tea, and other medicaments regularly seen in such cases. His clear cut, though somewhat tired features had lost scarcely anything of their grace, and but for the deep atony and the incurably despairing look in his eyes, Octavius seemed to be in the enjoyment of ordinary health.

Indifferent to everything as Octavius might be, he was nevertheless struck by the curious aspect of the physician. Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau seemed to have emerged from some fantastic tale by Hoffmann, and to be walking about in the midst of reality amazed at the sight of this droll character. His deeply tanned face was almost swallowed up by a huge skull which a growing baldness caused to appear larger still. This bare skull, shining like ivory, had retained its white colour, while the face, exposed to the rays of the sun, had acquired, thanks to successive layers of tan, the shade of old oak or a smoky portrait. The flat surfaces, the cavities and the projections of the bones stood out so strongly that the small amount of skin that covered them resembled, with its innumerable

broken wrinkles, a wet skin drawn over a death's head. The few remaining gray hairs that still lingered on his poll, brushed together in three thin wisps, one of which, springing from the nape of the neck, flattened out in front, while the other two upreared themselves behind his ears, made one regret the old full-bottomed wig or the modern tow mop, and grotesquely topped his nut-cracker-like face. But what irresistibly attracted one in him was his eyes. In the midst of his face tanned by years, calcined by burning skies, worn by study, and on which the fatigue of science and life had left its mark in the form of deep furrows, of widespreading crowfeet, in folds closer pressed than the leaves of a book, there sparkled two eyes of a turquoise blue, inconceivably limpid, fresh, and youthful-looking. These blue stars shone from out of two brown orbits and concentric membranes, the tawny circles of which faintly recalled the feathers arranged in the form of an aureole round the nyctalopial eyes of the owl. It seemed as though, thanks to a spell learned from brahmins and pandits, the doctor had stolen the eyes of a child and had fitted them to his own cadaverous face. Judged by their glances, the old man was twenty and the young man sixty.

He wore the classical dress of a physician, black coat and trousers, black silk waistcoat, and in his shirt front a huge diamond given him by a nabob or a rajah. But his clothes hung on him as if they were suspended from a hook, and formed perpendicular folds that were broken into sharp angles by his tibias and femurs when he sat down. The blazing sun of India did not of itself account for such phenomenal leanness; no doubt Balthazar Cherbonneau had submitted, in the course of some initiation, to the long fasts of the fakirs and had sat with the yoghis on a gazelle skin between four burning braziers. The loss of flesh, however, did not mean any weakening of his powers; solid ligaments, stretched out on the hands like the strings on the neck of a violin, connected the dry bones of the knuckles and made them move without much creaking.

The doctor took the seat which Octavius pointed to by the side of the divan, folding his elbows like a yard measure and indulging in gestures that betrayed an inveterate habit of sitting on carpets. Thus placed, Dr. Cherbonneau had his back to the light, which shone full on his patient's face, a situation favourable to observation and generally adopted by those who are more desirous of seeing than of being seen. Although the phy-

sician's face was in the shadow, and the top of his skull, rounded and shining like an ostrich's egg, alone caught the light, Octavius perceived the gleam of the strange blue eyes that seemed endowed with a light of their own, after the manner of phosphorescent bodies. There flashed from them a clear, piercing glance that struck the young man fair in the breast with a sensation of prickling and heat comparable to that caused by emetics.

"Well, sir," said the physician, after a moment of silence during which he appeared to be summing up the signs noted by him in a rapid examination, "I see at once that in your case we have not to do with ordinary pathology. You are not suffering from any of those diseases that are catalogued, the symptoms of which are well known, and which a doctor can cure or aggravate; so that after I have talked a little with you I shall not ask you for a sheet of paper on which to inscribe a harmless formula from the *Codex*, with an undecipherable signature at the bottom of it, for your man to take to the druggist's at the corner."

Octavius smiled faintly, as if to thank the physician for sparing him useless and unnecessary remedies.

"Do not rejoice too soon," continued the doctor. "Because you have neither hypertrophy of the heart,

nor tuberculosis, nor softening of the spine, nor water on the brain, nor typhoid, nor nervous fever, it does not follow that you are in good health. Give me your hand."

Thinking that Dr. Cherbonneau wished to feel his pulse, and expecting to see him pull out his chronometer, Octavius pulled up the sleeve of his gandoura, uncovered his wrist, and mechanically held it out to the physician. Without troubling to find with his thumb that slow or rapid pulsation which indicates whether the clock of life in man is out of order, Dr. Cherbonneau took the young man's slender, veined, and moist hand in his own brown one, the bony fingers of which looked like the claws of a crab, and felt it, kneaded it and massaged it, so to speak, as if to establish magnetic relations with his patient. Sceptical as Octavius was in medical matters, he could not help feeling a certain nervous anxiety, for it seemed to him that the physician was drawing his very soul out of him by the pressure of his hand, and that the blood had fled from his cheeks.

"My dear Mr. Octavius," said the physician as he dropped the young man's hand, "your condition is more serious than you believe, and science, such as old

European routine understands it, can do nothing for you. You have lost the will to live, and your soul is gradually detaching itself from your body; you are not suffering from hypochondria, lypemania or any melancholic tendency to suicide. Not in the least. Strange to say, you might, did I not interpose, die without having any appreciable internal or external lesion. It was high time you sent for me, for your spirit clings to your body by a mere thread; however, we shall put a good knot in it."

Whereupon the doctor rubbed his hands gleefully, with a grimacing smile that caused a perfect eddy of wrinkles on his many-lined face.

"I do not know, Dr. Cherbonneau, whether you can cure me or not; to tell the truth, I do not care much whether you do or not, but I am bound to confess that at the first glance you have perceived the cause of the mysterious condition in which I find myself. It seems to me as though my body had become permeable, so that my being escapes from it as water from a sieve. I feel myself melting into the great Everything and I find it difficult to distinguish myself from that into which I am plunging. Though, in order not to grieve my parents and my friends, I perform, so far as I am able, the

usual pantomime of life, yet that life itself seems to be so far removed from me that there are times when I believe myself to have already left this earthly sphere. I come and go from the same motives that formerly acted upon me and the mechanical impulse of which still subsists, but without entering into what I do. I sit down to table at the usual hours, and appear to be eating and drinking; but I find the spiciest dishes and the headiest wines tasteless; the light of the sun is no brighter than that of the moon as far as I am concerned, and the candles burn with a black flame. On the hottest days of summer I feel cold, and sometimes there falls within me a silence so deep that my heart appears to have stopped beating and the inner wheels to have been arrested by some unknown cause. If the dead can feel, death must be something like that."

"You are suffering," returned the physician, "from a chronic impossibility of living, which is a much more common malady than is supposed. Thought is a force as capable of killing as prussic acid or the electric current, although the traces of the ravages it makes are not perceptible to the slight means of analysis at the disposal of ordinary scientists. What is the grief which has struck its sharp hooked beak into your liver?

What vaulting ambition in you has overleapt itself and caused you to fall back broken and bruised? What bitter despair are you nursing in your immobility? Are you a prey to the thirst for power? Have you of your own accord given up attaining an end beyond the power of the human will? You are rather young for that. Has some woman betrayed you?"

"No such luck, doctor," answered Octavius. "I am not even so fortunate as that would imply."

"Yet," replied Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau, "I can read in your lack-lustre eyes, in the discouraged attitude of your body, in the dull tone of your voice, the title of one of Shakespeare's plays as plainly as if it were stamped in gilt letters on the back of a morocco binding."

"And what is the play I translate unwittingly?" asked Octavius, whose curiosity was awakened in spite of himself.

"'Love's Labour's Lost,'" returned the doctor, in an accent so correct that it testified to a long sojourn in the British possessions in India.

Octavius did not answer, but a blush mantled his cheeks, and to conceal his embarrassment he took to playing with the cords of his girdle. The doctor had

crossed his legs in a way to suggest the cross bones on tombstones, and held his foot with his hand in the Oriental fashion. His blue eyes looked straight into Octavius' and questioned him with a glance at once imperious and gentle.

"Come, confide in me," said he. "I am the physician of souls; you are my patient, and like a Roman priest with his penitent I call for a full confession, which you can make without having to kneel down."

"What would be the good of it? Even supposing you have guessed aright, it would not ease my pain to tell you of it. I am not a talkative sufferer, and no human power, not even yours, can cure me."

"That is as may be," returned the doctor, settling himself more comfortably in his arm-chair, like a man making ready to listen to somewhat lengthy confidences.

"I do not mean," went on Octavius, "that you shall accuse me of childish obstinacy, and give you the chance, through my keeping silence, of washing your hands of my death; so, since you insist upon it, I shall tell you my story; you have guessed the main part of it; I shall not refuse to let you hear the details. But do not look for anything romantic or singular. My adventure is very simple, very common, very ordinary;

but, as Heine says in his song, it is always new to the subject of it and breaks his heart. Indeed, I am somewhat ashamed to tell so commonplace a thing to a man like you, who have lived in the strangest and the most wonderful lands."

"Let not that trouble you; it is only the commonplace that is extraordinary to me now," returned the physician, with a smile.

"Well, then, doctor, I am dying of love."

II

I HAPPENED to be in Florence in 184–, at the end of the summer, that is, at the best season in which to see Florence. I had leisure, money, good introductions, and I was at that time a cheerful young fellow ready to enjoy life. I lodged on the Long' Arno, secured a carriage, and let myself be carried away by that delightful Florentine life so charming to a stranger. In the morning I would visit some one of the churches, a palazzo, or a gallery, at my leisure and without hurrying myself, for I desired to avoid having that indigestion of masterpieces that causes tourists in Italy, when too eager, to hate art. At other times I would study the bronze gates of the Baptistery, or the Perseus by Benvenuto under the Loggia dei Lanzi, the portrait of the Fornarina at the Uffizi, or again Canova's Venus in the Pitti Palace, but I never studied more than one thing at a time. Then I would breakfast at the Café Doney on a cup of iced coffee, smoke a few cigars, run through the papers, and after having, whether I would or not, purchased a flower for

my buttonhole from the pretty flower-girls in straw hats who ply their trade in front of the café, I returned home to enjoy a siesta. At three o'clock my carriage drove up to take me to the Cascine, which is to Florence what the Bois de Boulogne is to Paris, save that every one knows every one else and that the round open space forms an open-air drawing-room, where the arm-chairs are replaced by carriages drawn up in a semicircle. The ladies, in full dress, half recumbent on the cushions, receive the visits of their lovers and particular admirers, of the dandies and the attachés, who remain standing on the carriage step bare-headed. But you know all about it as well as I do. It is there that plans are made for the evenings, that meetings are arranged, that answers are given and invitations accepted. It is like a Pleasure Exchange held from three to five in the afternoon under the shade of the fine trees and under the loveliest sky in the world. Every one who is any one at all is bound to put in an appearance once a day at the Cascine; nor did I fail to do so, while in the evening, after dinner, I visited friends or went to the Pergola, when the singer was worth the trouble.

"I thus spent one of the happiest months in my life, but that happiness was to be of brief duration. A splen-

did carriage appeared one day at the Cascine. This superb Vienna-built vehicle, a masterpiece by Laurenzi, shining with the brightest varnish and adorned with an almost regal coat of arms, was drawn by the handsomest pair of horses that ever pranced in Hyde Park or at a Queen's drawing-room at Saint James'. It was driven postillion fashion in the most perfect form by a very young jockey in white breeches and green jacket. The brass on the harness, the axles of the wheels shone like gold and flashed in the sunshine. Everybody watched this splendid equipage, which, after making on the sanded drive a curve as regular as if it had been traced with compasses, drew up alongside of the other carriages. You guess of course that the carriage was not unoccupied, but as it drove up rapidly, it had been impossible to note more than a shoe tip resting on the front cushions, the broad fold of the shawl, and the disk of a sunshade fringed with white silk. The sunshade was closed, and there burst on our sight a woman of incomparable beauty.

"Being on horseback I was able to draw near enough to lose no part of this human masterpiece. The strange lady wore a dress of that silvery water-green which makes any woman whose complexion is not irre-

proachable, look as black as a mole. It was a piece of audacity on the part of a fair woman sure of herself. A large shawl of white China crape, thickly covered with embroidery of the same colour, enveloped her in its soft drapery that fell in small pleated folds like a tunic by Phidias. Her face was framed in a bonnet of the finest Florentine straw, trimmed with forget-me-nots and delicate water plants with narrow glaucous leaves. She wore no jewels; but a delicately tinted long gray glove enveloped in artistic folds reaching to the elbow the arm with which she supported the ivory handle of her sunshade.

"Forgive me, dear doctor, this society journal description, but the least remembrances assume extraordinary importance in the eyes of a lover. Thick bands of wavy golden hair, the ringlets of which formed as it were waves of light, fell in opulent masses on either side her brow, whiter and purer than the virgin snow that has fallen by night upon the highest summit of an alp. Long, delicate lashes, resembling the golden threads which the mediæval miniaturists set about the heads of their angels, half veiled her eyes of a blue green similar to the light which shines through glaciers under certain sun effects. Her mouth, divinely shaped, had the rosy tint of the valves of Venus' shells, while

her cheeks resembled timid white roses blushing under the confession of a nightingale or the kiss of a butterfly. No human brush could reproduce that complexion, so exquisite, so blooming, so transparent, that it seemed to have nothing material about it, and its colouring to be due to something else than the common blood that flows through our veins. Alone could the first flush of dawn on the summits of the Sierra Nevada, the rosy tint of some white camellias where the petal turns over, or Parian marble seen through a rosy gauze, give a distant notion of it. So much of her skin as showed between the ribbons of her bonnet and the top of her shawl shone with iridescent fairness, with faint opaline reflections on the edge of the contours. It was the colouring and not the drawing of that dazzling head that first attracted one, like the fine works of the Venetian school, though her features were as pure and delicate as those of antique profiles engraved on cameos.

"Just as at the sight of Juliet, Romeo forgot Rosalind, so did I, on the apparition of this sovran beauty, forget all my former loves; the leaves of the book of my heart became fair and clean again, every name and every remembrance was blotted from them. I could not understand how I had ever taken any pleasure in the

commonplace connections which so few young men manage to steer clear of, and I regretted having indulged in them, just as if they had been positive infidelities. That fateful meeting opened a new life for me.

"The carriage left the Cascine and returned towards the city, bearing away the dazzling vision. I rode by the side of a young Russian, a very amiable fellow and well informed as regarded travellers belonging to the highest society, for he was a great frequenter of watering-places and was received in every cosmopolitan drawing-room in Europe. Little by little I turned the conversation to the strange lady, and I learned that she was the Countess Prascovia Labinski, a Lithuanian lady of illustrious birth and vast wealth, whose husband had now been for two years fighting in the Caucasus.

"I need not relate to you how diplomatically I set to work in order to be introduced to the Countess, who, on account of her husband's absence, was exceedingly careful not to receive many persons; but at last I gained my point, — two dowager princesses and four baronesses of mature age having pledged their antique virtue that I was respectable.

"Countess Labinski had rented a magnificent villa that had formerly belonged to the Salviati. It stood a couple of miles or so outside of Florence, and in a few days she had managed to install modern comfort in the antique manor without in the least detracting from its severe beauty and its quiet elegance. Great blazoned portières were hung between the pointed arches; old-fashioned arm-chairs and furniture harmonised with the walls, wainscotted in brown woods or covered with frescoes of a dull, faded tone like that of old tapestries. No crude colours, no bright gilding troubled the eye, and the present did not strike a false note in the memories of the past. The Countess herself looked so naturally a lady of the manor that the old palace seemed to have been built expressly for her.

"Deeply impressed as I had been by the radiant beauty of the Countess, I was still more so, after a few visits, by her remarkable, refined, highly cultured mind. When she spoke on a subject that interested her, her soul emerged, so to speak, and became visible. Her fairness was illumined, like alabaster, by an internal light; her complexion glowed with the phosphorescent scintillations, the luminous quiverings, of which Dante speaks in his description of the splendours of

Paradise; at such times she looked like an angel standing out brightly against the sun. I remained dazzled, plunged in ecstasy, speechless. Absorbed in the contemplation of her beauty, ravished by the sounds of her celestial voice that made every tongue ineffable music, I would stammer, when compelled to speak, a few incoherent words that must have led her to entertain a very low opinion of my intelligence. Sometimes, indeed a faint smile, full of kindly irony, flitted like a rosy gleam upon her lovely lips as I uttered words that betrayed my deep emotion or my incurable folly.

"I had not once as yet spoken to her of my love. In her presence I seemed wholly to lack the power of thinking; I had no strength, no courage; my heart beat as though it would break its bonds and leap into the lap of its queen. Again and again I resolved to speak out, but an insurmountable timidity held me back; the least cold or reserved look on her part made me suffer deadly pain, like a criminal who, his head on the block, is awaiting the stroke of the axe upon his neck. I was choked by nervousness, and icy sweat broke out all over my body. I reddened and turned pale in turns, and finally would leave without having said a word, finding the door with difficulty and

staggering like a drunken man on the steps of the stairs.

"Once outside, my faculties returned and I poured out to the winds the most burning dithyrambics, addressing to my absent idol a thousand declarations of love irresistible in their eloquence. In these mute apostrophes I equalled the greatest poets that have sung of love. Solomon's "Song of Songs," with its troublous Oriental perfume and its hasheesh-inspired lyricism, Petrarch's sonnets, with their platonic subtleties and their ethereal sweetness, Heinrich Heine's Intermezzo, full of nervous delirious feeling, fell far short of these inexhaustible effusions of my soul in which I exhausted my life. As I ended these monologues, it seemed to me that the Countess, vanquished at last, must of necessity descend from heaven upon my heart, and more than once I closed my arms believing that I was clasping her in them.

"I was so thoroughly possessed that I would spend whole hours murmuring like a litany of love the two words, Prascovia Labinski,—experiencing inexpressible delight in the speaking of these syllables, that now I dropped slowly as though they were pearls, and now spoke with the feverish volubility of a devotee intoxicated

by his prayer itself. At other times I would write her beloved name upon the finest sheets of vellum, indulging in all the calligraphic refinements of the manuscripts of the Middle Ages, ornaments of gold, fleurons of azure, scrolls of green. I spent in this minutely passionate and childishly perfect labour the weary hours that intervened between my visits to the Countess. I could neither read nor busy myself with anything. Outside of Prascovia nothing interested me, and I did not even open the letters that reached me from France. I made repeated efforts to shake off this condition; I tried to recall the axioms of seduction believed in by young men and the stratagems resorted to by the Lovelaces of the Café de Paris and the Don Juans of the Jockey Club; but when it came to applying these, my heart would fail me and I would regret that I did not possess, like Stendhal's Julian Sorel, a series of graduated letters that I might copy and send to the Countess. I was satisfied with loving her, giving myself wholly without asking for aught in return, without even the most distant hope, for in my boldest dreams I scarcely dared to touch with my lips her rosy finger tips. No more religiously could a young novice in the fifteenth century, his brow pressed upon the steps of the altar, or a

knight kneeling in his armour of steel, have worshipped the Blessed Virgin."

Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau had listened to Octavius with deep attention, the young man's story being to him something more than a mere romantic tale, and he said to himself, during one of the pauses made by the narrator: "Yes, that is the very diagnosis of the passion of love; a curious disease that I have but once before met with, at Chandernagore, in a young pariah maid who loved a Brahmin. She died of it, did the poor girl, but she was a savage, while you, Mr. Octavius you are civilised, and I shall cure you."

Having closed his parenthesis, he signed to the young man to proceed, and, having folded his leg back against his thigh like the leg of a grasshopper, so as to rest his chin on his knee, he settled himself in that position, which no one else could have assumed, but which seemed to be particularly commodious in his case.

"I shall not weary you with a detailed account of my secret martyrdom," continued Octavius, "and I shall come at once to a decisive incident. One day, unable longer to repress my imperious desire to see the Countess, I called earlier than usual. The weather

was close and stormy. I did not find her in the drawing-room; she had settled herself under a portico, supported by slender pillars, that opened on a terrace leading down to the gardens. She had had her piano, rattan arm-chairs, and chairs brought there; flower-stands, filled with the choicest flowers — nowhere so beautiful as in Florence — stood in the spaces between the pillars and perfumed the faint puffs of air that at long intervals blew down from the Apennines. Through the open arcading showed the trimmed yews and clipped box-trees of the garden, while centenarian cypresses rose from among them and a population of mythological marbles in the fretful taste of Baccio Bandinelli and Ammanato. In the distance, above the sky-line of Florence, swelled the dome of Santa Maria del Fiore and the square belfry-tower of the Palazzo Vecchio rose in the air.

"The Countess was alone, resting on the rattan couch. Never had she seemed so fair; her lissom body, relaxed by the heat, was plunged, like that of a sea-nymph, in the white foam of a full Indian muslin wrapper, trimmed from top to bottom with a fringe curled like the silver crest of a wave. A brooch of Khorassan inlaid steel fastened on the bosom this robe

which was as light as the drapery that flutters around the Bending Victory. From her sleeves, open above the elbow, like the pistil of the calyx of a flower, emerged her arms purer in tone than the alabaster the Florentine sculptors use in making copies of antique statues. A broad black ribbon, fastened at the waist and the ends of which fell down in front, contrasted strongly with the white of the dress. This contrast of shades, commonly adopted for mourning, was brightened by the tip of a little Circassian slipper, without heel-pieces, and embossed with yellow arabesques, that peeped out under the hem of the muslin skirt.

"The Countess' fair hair, the puffed bandeaux of which, as though lifted by the breeze, showed her fair brow and her transparent temples, formed a sort of halo round her head in which the light played with golden scintillations.

"On a chair by her side fluttered in the wind the brim of a great rice-straw hat, trimmed with long black ribbons like those on the dress, and by it lay a pair of Suède gloves that had never been worn. As she saw me, Prascovia closed the book she was reading — it was the 'Poems of Miskiewicz' — and gave me a kindly nod. She was alone, an uncommon and favourable cir-

cumstance. I sat down in front of her on the seat she pointed to. Silence, embarrassing when prolonged, fell upon us for a few moments. I could not think of any of the usual commonplaces of conversation; my brain was inert, hot flushes rose from my heart to my eyes, and my love cried out to me: 'Do not lose this supreme chance.'

"I know not what I might have done, had not the Countess, who divined my emotion, half risen and stretched out her lovely hand as if to close my lips.

"'Do not say a word, Octavius; you love me; I know it, I feel it, I believe it. Nor am I angry with you on that account, for love is involuntary. Other and more severe women would take offence; but as for me, I pity you, for I cannot love you and it is sad for me to be the cause of sorrow to you. I regret that you ever met me, and I curse the caprice that led me to leave Venice for Florence. I had hoped that my persistent coolness would weary you and cause you to leave me; but true love, every mark of which I read in your eyes, is not to be repelled. Let not my kindness lead you to indulge in the least illusion, in the least dream of hope, and do not mistake my pity for encouragement. An angel with diamond shield and

flaming sword protects me against all seductions better than religion, duty, and virtue could do it. That angel is my love. I adore Count Labinski. I am fortunate enough to have found passion in marriage.'

"This frank, loyal, and nobly chaste confession made the tears pour in floods from my eyes, and I felt the springs of life dry up within me. Prascovia much moved, rose and with a movement of gracious feminine pity, dried my eyes with her cambric handkerchief.

"'Come, do not weep,' she said. 'I forbid you to do so. Try to think of something else; fancy that I have gone forever, that I am dead; forget me. Travel, work, do good, take an active part in human affairs; let art or another love console you.'

"I interrupted her with a gesture of negation.

"'Do you think you would suffer less if you continued to see me?' went on the Countess. 'Come, then; I shall always be at home to you. God says we must forgive our enemies; why, then, should we treat less generously those who love us? Yet absence seems to me the safer remedy. Two years hence we may meet without danger — so far as you are concerned,' she added with an attempt at a smile.

"I left Florence the next day, but neither study, nor travel nor time have softened my sufferings, and I feel that I am dying. Pray do not try to prevent it, doctor."

"Have you ever met Countess Labinski since then?" asked the doctor, whose blue eyes shone strangely.

"No," answered Octavius; "but she is now in Paris." And he handed Dr. Cherbonneau an engraved card on which were these words: —

"Countess Prascovia Labinski, at home, Thursdays."

III

AMONG the then infrequent pedestrians who in the Champs-Élysées proceeded up the Avenue Gabriel, between the Turkish Embassy and the Élysée Bourbon, — preferring the solitude, silence, and coolness of that road, bordered on the one side with trees and on the other with gardens, to the dusty whirl and fashionable bustle of the main road, — there were few who did not stop, thoughtful and admiring, with a touch of envy, in front of a mysterious and poetic retreat in which, wonderful to relate, wealth and happiness seemed to dwell together.

Who is there who has not stayed his steps in front of the gates of a park, and looked long at the white villa within, through the clumps of verdure, and then gone on his way with heavy heart as though the dream of his life were concealed behind the walls? On the other hand, there are dwellings that, thus seen from the exterior, fill one with undefinable gloom; ennui, loneliness, despair seem to make the façades ice-

cold with their gray tints and to yellow the tops of the half leafless trees; the statues are covered with a mossy leprosy; the flowers are blighted; the water in the ponds is green and stagnant; the weeds, heedless of the hoe, grow on the walks; the birds, if any there be, are silent.

The gardens, on a lower level than the main walk, were separated from it by a ha-ha fence, and ran, in broader or narrower bands, up to the mansion the front of which looked out upon the Rue du Faubourg-Saint-Honoré. The one to which I refer ended at the ditch in a platform supported by a wall built of large stones, selected on account of the peculiar irregularity of their shapes, and which, rising on either side, like the wings of a stage, framed within their broken outlines and sombre masses the cool, green prospect between them.

In the crevices of these stones Indian fig trees, carnation milk-wort, Saint John's wort, London pride, ivy-leaved toad flax, white stonecrop, red Alpine campion, and Irish ivy had found soil enough to feed their roots, and showed their varied greens against the bold background of stone — no painter could have devised a better set-off in the foreground of his picture.

The side walls which enclosed this terrestrial paradise disappeared under a mantle of climbing plants, aristolochias, blue passion-flowers, bell-flowers, honeysuckle, gypsophila, Chinese glycinas, periplocas from Greece, the tendrils, filaments, and stems of which twisted and climbed upon a green trellis, for even happiness refuses to be imprisoned. Thanks to this arrangement, the garden resembled a forest clearing rather than a somewhat narrow flower garden circumscribed by civilised fences.

Somewhat behind the masses of rockery were grouped a few clumps of trees, of elegant port and rich foliage, contrasting happily the one with the others: Japanese sumachs, Canadian lignum vitæ, Virginian plane-trees, green ash-trees, white willows, nettle-trees of Provence, and, rising above all these, two or three larches. Beyond the trees stretched a rye-grass lawn, in which not one blade of grass was taller than its neighbour, a sward finer and silkier than a queen's velvet mantle, and of that ideal emerald green seen in perfection only in England in front of the façades of feudal manor-houses; a soft natural carpet which the eye loves to dwell on and the foot fears to press, a vegetable Wilton on which alone may play, by day, the

tame gazelle and the ducal baby in its lace robes, and, at night, may glide some Titania from the West End, her hand clasped in that of an Oberon whose name is inscribed in Burke's "Peerage and Baronetage."

A walk covered with carefully sieved sand, lest a bit of shell or of flint should hurt the aristocratic feet that left their delicate imprint upon it, ran like a yellow ribbon round the well rolled, green, short, thick sward, which artificial rain kept constantly moistened, even in the driest days of summer.

At the end of the lawn blazed, at the time of my tale, a perfect fireworks of flowers, due to a mass of geraniums the scarlet stars of which flamed against a brown background of heath.

The prospect was closed by the elegant façade of the mansion. Slender Ionic pillars supporting an attic, surmounted, at each corner, by a graceful marble group, gave it the look of a Greek temple transported thither by a millionaire's whim, and it toned down, by the thoughts of art and poetry it awakened, any possible excess in the luxuriousness of the place. Between the pillars the blinds, striped with broad red bands and almost always closed, shaded and indicated the windows, that opened level with the portico like glass doors.

When the capricious Paris sky condescended to stretch a background of blue behind this palazzino, the lines of it showed so delightfully between the masses of verdure that it might have been taken for the resting place of the Queen of Fairies or for an enlarged painting by Baron.

Had some early rising poet passed through the Avenue Gabriel with the first flush of dawn, he would have heard the nightingale warbling the last trills of its *nocturne*, and seen the blackbird walking about the garden walk in yellow slippers, like one thoroughly at home. At night, that same poet, after the roll of the last carriages returning from the Opera had died out in the silence of the sleeping city, would have dimly made out a white shadow leaning on the arm of a handsome youth, and he would have climbed up to his solitary garret, his soul sick unto death.

The reader has already guessed that this had been for some time the abode of Countess Prascovia Labinski and of her husband, Count Olaf Labinski, who had returned from the war in the Caucasus after a glorious campaign, in which, even though he had not fought hand to hand with the mysterious and elusive Schamyl, he had had to do with the most fanatically devoted

Mourids of the illustrious sheik. He had escaped the deadly bullets in the way in which brave men escape them, by dashing to meet them, and the curved Damascus blades of the fierce warriors had been broken on his breast without penetrating it. Courage is a cuirass of proof. Count Labinski had the valour of the Slavonic races, which love danger for its own sake, and to whom may still be applied that refrain of the old Scandinavian song: "They slay, die, and laugh."

Thomas Moore alone, writing in the vein of his "Loves of the Angels," could depict the intoxicating joy which filled the pair, for whom marriage was but a passion allowed of God and men, when they were reunited. Every drop of ink in my pen would have to turn into a drop of light, and every word evaporate on the paper in flame and perfume like a grain of incense. How can I paint these two souls melted into one and similar to two dewdrops that, gliding down the petal of a lily, meet, mingle, absorb one another and form but a single pearl? Happiness is so rare a thing in this world that it has not occurred to man to invent words capable of expressing it, while the vocabulary of suffering, moral and physical, fills numberless columns in the dictionaries of every language.

Olaf and Prascovia had loved each other in childhood; their hearts had never been stirred save by the one name; almost from the cradle they had known that one day they would wed, and the rest of the world did not exist for them. They seemed to be the halves of Plato's androgyne, which have in vain sought each other since the original divorce, and which had met and united in them. They were the duality in unity which is complete harmony, and side by side they walked, or rather flew through life, with an even, sustained flight, soaring like two doves called by the same desire, to recall Dante's exquisite image.

That naught might trouble their felicity it was bathed in a golden atmosphere of immense wealth. Wherever the radiant couple appeared, poverty relieved threw off its rags, and tears dried up; for Olaf and Prascovia had the noble selfishness of happiness: they could not bear the sight of grief within their own radiance.

Since the day when polytheism bore away with it the young gods, the smiling genii, the celestial youths with forms so absolutely perfect, so rhythmically harmonious, so ideally pure, and since Greece has ceased to sing the hymn of beauty in strophes of Parian

marble, man has taken cruel advantage of the permission to be ugly, and although he was made in the image of God, he is but a poor counterfeit presentment of Him. Count Labinski, however, had not availed himself of the license thus given; the somewhat long oval of his face, his thin nose, bold and delicate in outline, the well cut lips, set off by a blond mustache drawn to a point, his well turned, dimpled chin, his black eyes — a piquant singularity, graceful in its strangeness — made him look like one of those warrior angels, Saint Michael or Saint Gabriel, who, clad in golden armour, fight the demon. He would have been too handsome but for the virile flash of his dark eyes and the tan with which the Asiatic suns had browned his features.

The Count was of medium stature, thin, slender, muscular, concealing a frame of steel under apparent frailness. When, at some ambassadorial ball, he wore his magnate's costume, heavily braided with gold and starred with diamonds, he passed among the guests like a dazzling apparition, exciting the jealousy of the men and the love of the women, whom Prascovia's beauty rendered indifferent to him. I need not add that he had gifts of mind that equalled his physical qualities;

the good fairies had richly endowed him at his birth, and the wicked fairy that spoils everything had shown herself good-tempered on that day.

It will readily be understood that with such a rival Octavius de Saville had but little chance of success, and that he showed wisdom in letting himself die quietly on the cushions of his divan, in spite of the hopes that the eccentric doctor strove to inspire him with. The only way would have been to forget Prascovia, but it was also the one thing impossible. On the other hand, what was the good of seeing her again? Octavius felt that the young woman's resolve would not abate one jot of its gentle implacability or of its kindly coldness. He dreaded having his yet unhealed wounds reopened and bleeding in the presence of her who was his innocent murderer; nor would he accuse her of it, for he loved her.

IV

TWO years had elapsed since the day when Countess Labinski had stayed on Octavius' lips the declaration of love she must not listen to. Octavius, his dream rudely shattered, had departed, bearing away with him a consuming grief, and had never sent any news of himself to Prascovia. The one thing he might have written he must not write. Yet more than once had the Countess, frightened by his silence, recalled with sadness the remembrance of her unfortunate adorer. Had he forgotten her? Divinely free from coquetry, she hoped he had, though she could not bring herself to believe it, for the undying flame of passion burned in his eyes, and the Countess had not read it wrong. Love and the gods recognise each other by the glance. The thought was a cloudlet on the clear azure of her happiness, and made her share the gentle sadness of angels that in heaven still remember earth. Her sweet soul suffered because she knew that far away some one was unhappy on her account; yet what can the star that

twinkles in the heavens do for the lowly herd who passionately stretches out his arms to it? In the days of mythology, it is true, Phoebe did descend from the heavens in the form of a silver beam upon the sleeping Endymion, but she was not wedded to a Polish count.

As soon as she reached Paris, Countess Labinski sent Octavius the hackneyed invitation which Doctor Balthazar Cherbonneau was absent-mindedly twisting between his fingers, and when he did not come, she had said to herself with an involuntary movement of joy, "He still loves me!" Yet she was a woman of angelic purity and chaste as the snow on the highest peak of the Himalayas, and Count Olaf himself could not have blamed her for that delicate emotion of her soul.

"Your story, which I have attentively listened to," said the doctor to Octavius, "convinces me that it would be madness for you to entertain the least hope. Countess Labinski will never return your love."

"And therefore, doctor, you must see that I am right not to try to prolong my wasting life."

"What I said was that there is no hope in usual means," went on the doctor. "There are, however,

occult powers which modern science is unacquainted with, and the traditional knowledge of which has been preserved in those strange countries called barbarous by an ignorant civilisation. There, in the early days of the world, mankind, then in close contact with the living forces of nature, was acquainted with secrets now believed to be lost, and which the migrating tribes, that later grew into nations, did not carry away with them. These secrets were at first transmitted by one of the initiated to another, in the mysterious depths of the temples; next were written in sacred idioms not understood of the vulgar, and cut in panels of hieroglyphs on the cryptic walls of Ellora. You may still, on the slopes of Mount Merou, whence flows the Ganges, at the foot of the white marble steps of Benares, the Holy City, or in the recesses of the ruined pagodas of Ceylon, come upon centenarian Brahmins deciphering unknown manuscripts, or yoghis busy repeating the ineffable monosyllable *om*, unaware that the birds of heaven are nesting in their hair, or fakirs whose shoulders bear the scars inflicted by the iron hooks of Juggernaut. These men possess the lost secrets by means of which, when they choose to make use of them, they obtain marvellous results. Our own Europe, wholly absorbed by

material cares, does not suspect the degree of spiritualism which has been attained by the penitents of India. Absolute fasts, contemplations terrifying in their intensity, impossible postures maintained for years at a time, have so thoroughly attenuated their bodies that they might be taken, when seen crouching under a burning sun, between blazing braziers, letting their nails grow until they enter the palms of their hands, for Egyptian mummies withdrawn from their cases and bent into the attitudes of monkeys. Their human frame is no more than a chrysalis, which the soul, the immortal butterfly, may leave or return to as it pleases. While their skinny frame remains there, inert, horrible to behold, resembling a larva of night surprised by the daylight, their mind, freed from all bonds, soars on the wings of hallucination, to measureless heights in the supernatural world. They have strange visions and dreams; they follow in a succession of ecstasies the undulations of the vanished centuries upon the ocean of eternity; they traverse the infinite in every direction; they behold the birth of worlds, the genesis and the metamorphoses of the gods. They recall the sciences swallowed up in the Plutonian and diluvian cataclysms, and the forgotten relations of man and the elements.

In that strange condition they murmur words belonging to tongues that no people has spoken on the surface of the earth for thousands and thousands of years; they come upon the primal Word, the Word that caused the light to flame out of the everlasting darkness. People call them mad; they are almost gods!"

This singular preamble excited in the highest degree Octavius' attention, and not knowing what Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau was driving at, he fixed upon him eyes that were full of amazement and sparkled with questionings. He could not make out the connection between the penitents of India and his love for the Countess Prascovia Labinski.

The doctor guessing his thoughts, waved his hand as if to forestall his questions, and said: —

"Patience, my dear patient; you will see presently that I am not indulging in needless digressions. Weary of questioning with a scalpel, on the marble tables of dissecting schools, bodies that answered not and that showed me but death where I sought life, I formed the project, as bold as that of Prometheus when he stormed the heavens to steal fire, — to find and seize upon the soul, to analyze it, and, so to speak, to dissect it. I abandoned the effect for the cause, and felt the deep-

est contempt for materialistic science, of which I had fathomed the nothingness. It struck me as coarse empiricism to work upon vague forms and chance aggregations of atoms that were forthwith dissolved. I endeavoured, by making use of magnetism, to relax the bonds that imprison the spirit within its frame, and soon I had gone beyond Mesmer, Deslon, Maxwell, Puységur, Deleuze, and the most skilful of them, in absolutely prodigious experiments, that, however, failed to satisfy me. Catalepsy, somnambulism, second sight, ecstatic lucidity, all these effects, inexplicable to the common run of men, but simple and intelligible to me, I produced at will. I went farther back. From the ecstasies of Cardan and Saint Thomas Aquinas I passed to the nervous attacks of the Pythiæ; I discovered the arcana of the Greek Epoptes and the Hebrew Nebiim; I was retrospectively initiated into the mysteries of Trophonius and Esculapius, ever and always recognising in the marvels told of them either an expansion or a contraction of the soul, due to a gesture, to a glance, to a word, to the will, or some other unknown agent. I performed, one after another, every miracle worked by Apollonius of Tyana, and yet my scientific dream had not come true; the soul still

escaped me. I could feel it, hear it, act upon it; I could excite or benumb its faculties, but there remained between me and it a fleshy veil that I could not draw aside without its escaping. I was like a bird-catcher that has a bird captive under a net he dare not lift lest he see his winged booty take flight into the heavens.

"I started for India, hoping to discover the solution of the riddle in that land of ancient wisdom. I learned Sanscrit and Pacrit, the learned and the vulgar idioms, and conversed with pandits and Brahmins. I traversed the jungles where roars the tiger crawling on its belly; I passed along the sacred ponds where dwell the scaly crocodiles; I crossed impenetrable forests defended by creepers, starting clouds of bats and troops of monkeys, and coming face to face with elephants at the corner of some path made by wild beasts, in order to reach the hut of a famous yoghi holding intercourse with the Mounis; and I sat for many days by him, sharing his gazelle skin, and noting the faint incantations whispered by his black and cracked lips in his ecstasy. In this way I learned omnipotent words, formulæ of evocation, and syllables of the Creative Word.

"I studied the symbolical carvings in the inner chambers of pagodas that no profane eye has ever rested

upon and into which my Brahmin's robe allowed me to penetrate. I read many a cosmogonic mystery, many a legend of vanished civilisations. I discovered the meaning of the emblems held in the numerous hands of the hybrid gods, as varied as is nature itself in India. I meditated upon the circle of Brahma, the lotus of Vishnu, the hooded cobra of Siwa, the blue God. Ganesa, stretching out his pachyderm's trunk and winking his little eyes with the long lashes, seemed to smile upon my efforts and to encourage me in my search. Every one of these monstrous figures said to me in their language of stone: 'We are but forms; it is the spirit that acts upon matter.'

"A priest of the Temple of Trincomalee, to whom I confided the idea that haunted me, told me of a penitent who inhabited one of the caves on the island of Elephanta, and who had attained to the highest degree of sublimity. I found him leaning against the wall of the cave, clothed in a rag of esparto, his chin between his knees, his hands clasped on his legs, in a state of absolute immobility. Only the whites of his eyes were visible; and his lips were turned back upon his gumless teeth; his skin, tanned by an incredible leanness, clung to his cheek-bones; his hair, thrown back, hung stiff as

the filaments of a plant from the edge of a crag, while his beard had parted into two streams that almost touched the ground, and his finger-nails resembled the talons of an eagle.

"He had been blackened and dried up by the sun to such an extent that his Indian's skin, naturally brown, looked like basalt, and as he leaned there he had the shape and colour of a Canopus vase. At the first glance I thought he was dead. I shook him by the arms, which were as if petrified in cataleptic stiffness, and shouted into his ear as loudly as I could the sacramental words by which he would know me for one of the initiated, but he made no motion and his eyelids did not quiver. I was about to depart, hopeless of getting anything out of him, when I heard a strange crackling; a bluish spark flashed past my eyes with the lightning-like rapidity of electric light, fluttered for a second upon the half-opened lips of the penitent, and vanished.

"Brahma-Loghum — such was the name of the holy man — seemed to awake as out of a trance; his eyeballs rolled back into their places, he looked at me with a human glance, and answered my questions.

"'Well, your wish has been granted; you have seen a soul. I have succeeded in separating mine from my

body whenever I please. It leaves it and returns to it under the form of a luminous bee, perceptible only to the adepts. I have fasted, prayed, and meditated so long, I have kept up such rigorous macerations, that I have managed to loose the earthly bonds that confine it, and that Vishnu, the god of the ten incarnations, has revealed to me the mysterious word which guides the soul in its avatars through different forms. Should I, after having made the prescribed gestures, speak that word, your soul would flee away to animate the man or the animal I should point out to it. This secret I bequeath to you; I am the only one on this earth who possesses it. I am very glad you have come, for I long to melt away in the bosom of the Uncreated, as does a drop of water in the ocean.'

"Thereupon the penitent whispered in my ear, with a voice as weak as the last murmur of the dying, but perfectly distinct, a few syllables that made, as Job says, 'fear come upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake.'"

"What do you mean, doctor?" cried Octavius. "I dare not venture to sound the terrifying depths of your words."

"I mean," quietly returned Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau, "that I have not forgotten the magical formula of my friend Brahma-Loghum, and that Countess Prascovia would have to be very clever indeed to recognise the soul of Octavius de Saville in the body of Olaf Labinski."

V

DR. BALTHAZAR'S reputation as a physician and thaumaturgist was beginning to spread through Paris, his eccentricities, whether natural or affected, having made him all the rage. But far from seeking to build up a practice, he did his best to repel patients by closing his door to them, giving them strange prescriptions, or ordering them to follow an impossible regimen. He attended desperate cases only, dismissing to his colleagues with haughty contempt commonplace cases of pneumonia, enteritis, or typhoid fever, and in these difficult cases he made cures that were fairly amazing. Standing by the bedside, he would make magical gestures over a cup of water, and the body, already cold and stiff, and ready for the coffin, would after a few drops of the water had been poured down between the jaws set in the agony of death, recover the flexibility of life and the colours of health, and sit up of itself, casting around a glance already used to the shades of the tomb. Cherbonneau therefore became known as the Physician of the Dead or the

Resurrectionist. Nor did he always condescend to perform cures, and more than once he refused the large fees offered him by dying millionaires. It required the grief of a mother begging for the life of her only child, the despair of a lover praying for the reprieve of his beloved, or the belief on his part that the endangered life was of use to poetry, science, or the progress of the human race, to induce him to enter the lists with death.

It was thus that he saved the life of a baby dying of croup, that of a lovely girl in the last stages of consumption, that of a poet the victim of *delirium tremens*, and that of an inventor struck down by apoplexy and who was about to carry away with him the secret of his discovery. In other cases he would reply that Nature should not be interfered with, that there was a good reason why certain deaths should occur, and that one ran the risk, by preventing them, of creating a disturbance in the order of the universe. Dr. Cherbonneau, it will be seen, was the most paradoxical of physicians, and had returned from India a confirmed eccentric. His renown as a mesmerist was even greater than his fame as a physician; he had admitted a small number of elect to séances in which he performed prodigies that

surpassed all notions of the possible or the impossible, and that were far ahead of the wonders wrought by Cagliostro.

The doctor lived on the ground-floor of an old house in the Rue du Regard, where he had an apartment *en suite*, as they used to be built, the high windows of which opened out on a garden planted with great trees with blackened trunks and sparse foliage. Although it was summer, powerful furnaces sent out blasts of hot air through their brass registers into the great rooms, keeping the temperature up to ninety or a hundred degrees, for Balthazar Cherbonneau, accustomed to the burning heats of India, shivered under the pale Parisian sun, just like that traveller who, having returned from the sources of the Blue Nile in Central Africa, trembled with cold in Cairo, and never went out save in a closed carriage, wrapped up in a pelisse of blue Siberian fox fur, and his feet resting upon a tin hot-water foot-warmer.

There was no other furniture in the rooms than low divans covered with Malabar stuffs embellished with chimerical elephants and fabulous birds, what-nots, carved, painted, and gilded with barbaric artlessness by the natives of Ceylon, and Japanese vases filled with

exotic flowers, while on the floor was spread, from one end of the apartment to the other, one of those funereal carpets with black-and-white flower pattern woven, by way of penance, by imprisoned Thugs, and the woof of which seems to be made of the hemp of their stranglers' cords. On stands in the corners there were a few Hindoo idols, in marble or bronze, cross-legged, with long, almond-shaped eyes, rings in their noses, thick, smiling lips, pearl necklaces falling down to their navels, and mysterious and strange attributes. Along the walls hung miniatures in water-colours, the work of some Calcutta or Lucknow artist, representing the nine avatars through which Vishnu has already passed, the fish, the tortoise, the pig, the human-headed lion, the Brahmin dwarf, the Rama, the hero fighting with the many-armed giant Cartasuciriargunen, the Kitona, the miraculous child, in which some recognise a Hindoo Christ; the Bouddha, worshipping the great god Mahadevi, and, finally, asleep in the centre of the Milky Sea, upon the cobra with its five heads curving up over him in the form of a dais, waiting until it is time to assume, as a last incarnation, the form of the winged pale horse, which, striking the earth with its hoof, is to cause the end of the world.

In the end room, heated even more than the others, sat Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau, surrounded by Sanscrit books engraved with a style upon thin blades of wood pierced with a hole at one end and fastened by a cord in such a way that they resembled Venetian blinds more than the books found in European booksellers' shops. An electrical machine, with its jars full of gold leaf, and its glass disks revolved by handles, exhibited its troublous and complicated silhouette in the centre of the room, by the side of a mesmeric tub into which was set a metal rod and from which radiated numerous iron bars. Dr. Cherbonneau was anything but a charlatan, and did not care for stage-setting, yet it was difficult to enter that strange retreat without experiencing, in part at least, an impression similar to that which alchemists' laboratories must have produced of yore.

Count Olaf Labinski had heard of the miracles wrought by the physician, and his half credulous curiosity had been awakened by these reports. The Slavic races have a natural love for the marvellous, a tendency not always checked by education even of the best. Besides, witnesses of undoubted credibility who had been present at the séances reported things which

it is impossible to believe unless one has seen them with one's own eyes, however implicitly one may trust in the narrator. So Count Olaf paid the thaumaturgist a visit.

When he entered the place, he felt himself bathed, as it were, in a faint atmosphere of fire; the blood rushed to his brain; his temples throbbed. The excessive heat of the rooms suffocated him; the aromatic oils burning in the lamps, and the great Javanese flowers the huge calyxes of which swung like censers, intoxicated him with their subtile emanations and asphyxiating scents. He staggered towards Dr. Cherbonneau, who was curled up on a divan in one of those curious attitudes adopted by fakirs and sannyasis, so picturesquely illustrated by Prince Soltikoff in his "Travels in India." With his angular limbs showing through the folds of his garments, he looked like a human spider curled up in the centre of its web and remaining motionless in the presence of its prey. At the sight of the Count his turquoise blue eyes lighted up with phosphorescent gleams that played in the centre of their golden orbits brown as hepatite, but they were at once dimmed as if by a film drawn over them at will. The doctor, perceiving Olaf's distress, put out

his hand towards him and with two or three passes surrounded him with an atmosphere of springtime, thus creating for him a cool paradise in that hell of heat.

"Do you feel any better?" he asked. "Your lungs, used to the Baltic breezes that reach you chilled after passing over the primeval snows of the Pole, must have panted like the bellows of a forge in this burning air, in which, nevertheless, I, who have been baked, roasted, and calcined, as it were, in the furnaces of the sun, shiver and tremble."

Count Olaf Labinski intimated that he no longer suffered from the oppressive heat of the room.

"Well," went on the doctor; "I suppose you have heard of my sleight-of-hand tricks, and are desirous of having a sample of my powers. I am far superior to Comus, Comte, or Bosco."

"My curiosity is not quite so frivolous," answered the Count, "and I have more respect for one of the princes of science."

"I am not a scientist in the usual meaning of the word," returned the physician. "On the other hand, while engaged in studying certain matters disdained by science, I have mastered unemployed occult forces,

and I produce results that, although natural, seem marvellous. By dint of watching for it, I have occasionally surprised the soul; I have profited by the confidences it has imparted to me, and remembered the words it has spoken to me. The spirit is everything; matter is but a mere appearance, and it may be that the universe is naught else than a dream of God or the irradiation of the Word in the infinite. I play as I please with the rag called the body; I stay life or hasten it; I suppress space; I displace the senses and destroy pain without needing the aid of chloroform, ether, or any other anæsthetic. Armed with my will, which is an intellectual electricity, I give life or blast it. Nothing remains opaque to my eyes; my glance traverses everything. I can distinctly see the rays of thought, and just as the rays of the solar spectrum can be projected on a screen, so I can compel them to pass through my invisible prism and force them to reflect themselves upon the white screen in my brain. But all this is nothing by the side of the prodigies performed by some of the Hindoo yoghis, who have attained the highest pitch of asceticism. We Europeans are too superficial, too careless, too frivolous, too much in love with our earthen prison to open in it

windows large enough to look out from upon eternity and the infinite. I have, nevertheless, obtained some rather strange results, of which you shall yourself be the judge," concluded Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau as he drew back a heavy portière that concealed a sort of alcove at the end of the room.

By the light of a spirit lamp quivering upon a bronze pedestal, Count Olaf Labinski beheld a sight so terrifying that in spite of his bravery he could not repress a shudder. On a black marble table lay the body of a young man, nude to the waist, and lying in the rigid immobility of death. Not a drop of blood flowed from his torso, which was stuck as full of darts as that of Saint Sebastian. He might have been taken for a coloured representation of a martyr, the lips of whose wounds had not been tinted with red.

"That strange physician," said Olaf to himself, "is perchance a worshipper of Siwa, and this is a victim offered up to his idol."

"He does not suffer in the least. You may prick him without fear; not a muscle will move," said the doctor as he drew the darts from the body, just as pins are taken from a pin-cushion.

A few rapid passes with the hands freed the patient from the network of effluvia in which he was imprisoned, and he woke with an ecstatic smile on his lips as if emerging from a dream of delight. Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau dismissed him with a wave of the hand, and the youth withdrew by a small door cut in the wainscotting of the alcove.

"I could have cut off his leg or his arm without his being aware of it," went on the physician, wrinkling his lips by way of a smile. "I did not do so because I have not yet got the length of creating, and because man, inferior in this respect to the lizard, is not yet sufficiently vigorous to grow new limbs in the room of those he loses. But if I cannot create, on the other hand I can make young again."

As he said these words, he took off the veil which covered an aged woman sunk in a magnetic sleep in an arm-chair, not far from the black marble table. Her features, which had no doubt once been beautiful, were wasted, and the ravages of time were plainly discernible in the emaciated outlines of her arms, her shoulders, and her bosom.

The doctor fixed upon her for a few moments, with obstinate intensity, the glance of his blue eyes. Then

the sunken lines filled out, the contours of the bosom resumed their virginal roundness, the hollows in the neck turned into white, satiny flesh; the cheeks rounded out and were covered with a peach-like bloom, the bloom of youth; the eyes opened and sparkled in a living fluid; the mask of old age, removed as by magic, allowed the long vanished beauty of the young woman to be seen again.

"Do you think the Fountain of Youth poured out its waters anywhere?" asked the doctor of the Count, who stood amazed at the metamorphosis. "I think it did, for man invents nothing, and every one of his dreams is a guess or a remembrance. But let us drop that frame remoulded for a time by my will, and let us consult the young woman sleeping quietly in yonder corner. Question her; you will find she knows more than did the sybils and pythias. You may send her to any one of your seven castles in Bohemia, ask her what is contained in the most secret of your drawers, and she will tell you, for it does not take her spirit more than a second to traverse the distance; not a very surprising thing, for the matter of that, since electricity travels two hundred and ten thousand miles in the same space of time, and electricity is to thought as a cab is

to a railway train. Take her hand so as to place yourself in communication with her. You need not formulate your question; she can read it in your mind."

The girl, in a voice as colourless as that of a shadow, replied to the unspoken question put by the Count.

"In the cedar casket there is a piece of earth dusted with fine sand on which is the imprint of a small foot."

"Has she guessed right?" asked the doctor carelessly, and as if sure of the somnambulist's infallibility.

A deep blush covered the Count's features. It was a fact that in the early days of his love he had taken from one of the walks in a park the print of Prascovia's foot, and he kept it like a relic in a box of the most precious workmanship, inlaid with mother-of-pearl and silver, the tiny key of which he wore on his neck hung from a Venice chain.

Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau, who was a well-bred man, noted the Count's embarrassment, and, without waiting for an answer to his question, led him to a table on which was placed a cup of water as clear as diamond.

"No doubt you have heard of the magic mirror in which Mephistopheles showed Faustus the image of Helen; now, although my silk stocking does not con-

ceal a cloven foot and I do not wear two cock's feathers in my hat, I can regale you with that simple prodigy. Bend over this cup and think intently of the person whom you wish to see. Living or dead, near by or far off, she will answer your call, whether from the ends of the world or the depths of history."

The Count bent over the cup, the water in which soon changed colour as he gazed, and became opaline as though a drop of essence had been poured into it. The vase became rimmed with the iridescent colours of the prism, forming a frame for the picture which already began to show within the whitish cloudiness.

The mist vanished. A young woman in a lace wrapper, with sea-green eyes and wavy golden hair, her lovely hands playing like white butterflies upon the ivory keys of the piano, showed as in a mirror at the bottom of the water, that had resumed its limpidity, and so marvellously perfect that she would have driven every painter to despair. It was Prascovia Labinski, who, unknowing it, obeyed the passionate evocation of the Count.

"And now let us pass to something stranger," said the physician, as he took the Count's hand and placed it upon one of the iron rods in the mesmeric bucket.

No sooner had Olaf touched the metal rod, charged with lightning-like electricity, than he fell as if smitten by a thunderbolt.

The physician took him up in his arms, lifted him as if he had been a feather, placed him on a divan, rang the bell, and said to the servant who appeared at the door : —

" Go and fetch Mr. Octavius de Saville."

VI

THE sound of a coupé was heard in the silent court-yard of the mansion, and almost immediately Octavius presented himself before the doctor. He was thunderstruck when Dr. Cherbonneau showed him Count Olaf Labinski stretched out upon a divan and apparently dead. His first thought was that a murder had been committed, and for a few moments he remained speechless with horror, but closer examination showed him that the young sleeper's breast rose and fell with an almost imperceptible respiration.

"There," said the physician, "is your disguise all ready for you. It is somewhat more difficult to put on than a costume hired from Babin, but Romeo, when he scaled Juliet's balcony, did not think of the danger he ran of breaking his neck, knowing that Juliet was awaiting him above in her nightrobe; surely Countess Prascovia Labinski is worth as much at least as the daughter of the Capulets."

Octavius, overcome by the strangeness of the situation, made no answer, but kept looking at the Count,

whose head, slightly thrown back, rested on a pillow, so that he resembled an effigy of a knight lying on a tomb in a Gothic cloister, with a carved marble pillow under its stiff neck. In spite of himself, the noble and handsome form he was about to rob of its soul, inspired him with remorse.

The doctor mistook Octavius' thoughtfulness for hesitancy, and a faint smile of contempt flickered on his lips.

"If your mind is not made up," he said, "I can awaken the Count, who will leave as he came, wondering at my magnetic power; but pray remember that such an opportunity may never again recur. At the same time, however much I may be interested in your love affair, and however desirous I am of trying an experiment never yet attempted in Europe, I am bound to tell you that there is a certain amount of danger in this transference of souls. Search your breast and question your own soul. Do you freely stake your life on this last card? Love is as strong as death, says the Bible."

"I am ready," quietly replied Octavius.

"That is right, young man," exclaimed the doctor, rubbing his wrinkled brown hands together with ex-

traordinary rapidity, as if he had been trying to make a fire after the manner of savages. "A love that hesitates at nothing pleases me. There are but two things in this world: love and will. It certainly shall not be my fault if you are not made happy. Ah! my old Brahma-Loghum, you shall now see from the depths of Indra's heaven, where the apsaras surround you in voluptuous groups, whether I have forgotten the irresistible formula you whispered in my ear as you cast away your mummified frame. Words and gestures, I have retained them all. And now, to work! to work! I shall make a strange stew in my caldron, like the witches in Macbeth, but without the wretched witchcraft of the North.—Seat yourself before me in that arm-chair, and abandon yourself trustfully to my power. That is right; your eyes fixed on mine and your hands in my hands. — The spell is already working; he is losing the notion of time and space; self-consciousness vanishes; his eyelids are closing; his nerves, no longer receiving the orders of the brain, are relaxing; his thoughts are slumbering, and every delicate fibre that binds the soul to the body is loosened. Brahma himself, in the golden egg wherein he dreamed for twice five thousand years, was not more separated from ex-

ternal things. Now let me saturate him in effluvia and bathe him in rays."

As he muttered these broken words, the doctor did not for a moment intermit his passes, and from his outstretched hands flashed luminous jets that smote the brow or the heart of his patient, around whom was little by little forming a sort of visible atmosphere, that was phosphorescent like a halo.

"That is good, very good," said Dr. Cherbonneau, applauding his own work. "He is in just the condition I want him. Come, come; what is it that still resists in that corner?" he cried after a pause, and as if he were reading through Octavius' brain the dying effort of the individuality about to be destroyed. "What is that rebellious thought, which, driven from the convolutions of the brain, tries to avoid my influence by clinging to the primitive monad, to the central point of life? I know how to catch and conquer it."

To overcome this involuntary revolt, the physician recharged even more powerfully than before the magnetic battery of his glance, and reached the rebellious thought between the base of the cerebellum and the insertion of the spinal marrow, the most secret sanc-

tuary, the most mysterious tabernacle of the soul. His triumph was complete.

Then he prepared himself with majestic solemnity for the incredible experiment he was about to attempt. He put on a linen robe, as if he were a mage; washed his hands in perfumed water; drew from various boxes powders with which he made hieratic marks on his cheeks and brow; wound round his arm the Brahminic cord; read two or three slokas from the sacred poems, and omitted none of the minute rites recommended by the sannyasi of the caves of Elephanta.

Having completed these ceremonies, he opened wide the hot-air registers, so that ere long the room was full of a burning atmosphere that would have made the tigers of the jungle pant, the crust of mud on the rough backs of the buffaloes crack, and the great flower of the aloe explode into bloom.

"The two sparks of divine fire which will presently be nude and freed for a few seconds from their mortal envelopes, must not pale or die in our icy air," said the doctor as he looked at the thermometer, which at that moment was up to one hundred and twenty degrees Fahrenheit.

Standing between the two inert bodies, Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau, in his white robes, looked like a priest of one of those sanguinary creeds that cast the bodies of men on the altars of their gods. He recalled the priest of Vitziliputzili, the grim Mexican idol, of which Heinrich Heine speaks in one of his ballads, but his intentions were assuredly more peaceable.

He drew near Count Olaf Labinski, who remained motionless, and uttered the ineffable syllable, which he then rapidly proceeded to repeat over Octavius, who was in a sound sleep. The ordinarily eccentric figure of Dr. Cherbonneau was at this moment singularly majestic; the sense of the mighty power at his command ennobled his jumbled features, and had any one seen him performing these rites with sacerdotal gravity, he would not have recognised in him the Hoffmannic physician who challenged, though at the same time he defied, the caricaturist's pencil.

Strange things then occurred: Octavius de Saville and Count Olaf Labinski seemed to feel simultaneously the throes of the dying, their faces were greatly altered, a light froth rose to their lips, the pallor of death overlaid their complexion, while two little bluish, trembling points of light sparkled uncertainly above their heads.

In response to a commanding gesture of the doctor's, who seemed to indicate the road they were to follow through the air, the two luminous points moved on, leaving behind them a wake of light, and proceeded to their new homes. The soul of Octavius entered the body of Count Labinski; that of Count Olaf penetrated into that of Octavius; the avatar was accomplished.

A slight colour rising to the cheek-bones showed that life had re-entered the human clay that had remained soulless for a few seconds, and that would have fallen a prey to the Dark Angel but for the physician's power.

Dr. Cherbonneau's blue eyes blazed with the exultation of triumph, and he said to himself, as he strode up and down the room: "Let the most famous physicians do as much, they who are so proud of being able to repair the human mechanism when it gets out of order. Hippocrates, Galen, Paracelsus, Van Helmont, Boerhaave, Rasori, one and all, the meanest Hindoo fakir crouching on the steps of a pagoda knows a thousand times more than you. What matters the body when one can command the spirit?"

As he ended his peroration, Dr. Cherbonneau leaped for delight, and danced round like the mountains in

King Solomon's Sir-Hasirim; indeed, he very nearly fell on his nose, his foot having tripped in the folds of his Brahminical robe. This slight accident recalled him to himself and restored all his calm.

"Let me waken my sleepers," said he, after having wiped off the coloured powder marks he had made on his face, and put away his Brahmin dress. Standing in front of the body of Count Labinski, now inhabited by the soul of Octavius, he made the passes necessary to draw him from the state of somnambulism, and at every pass he shook his fingers, heavy with the fluid he drew away.

In a few minutes Octavius-Labinski — for so I shall call him for the sake of clearness — sat up, passed his hand over his eyes, and cast around him a look of amazement which was as yet unillumined by the consciousness of his new being. When he at last managed to perceive things clearly, the first thing he saw was his own body lying on a divan beyond him. He beheld himself, not merely reflected as in a mirror, but actually. He uttered a cry, which did not sound like his own voice and startled him, for the transference of souls having been effected during his magnetic sleep, he had no remembrance of it and experienced strange

discomfort. His thought, served by different organs, was like a workman who has been given new tools in exchange for those with which he was familiar. His bewildered soul beat with restless wings against the walls of that unknown cranium, and lost itself in the convolutions of the brain, in which still lingered some traces of foreign ideas.

"Well," said the doctor, when he had sufficiently enjoyed the surprise of Octavius-Labinski, "what think you of your new home? Is your soul comfortable in the body of that handsome cavalier, hetman, hospodar, or magnate, the husband of the most beautiful woman in the world? You do not feel like letting yourself die as you did the first time I saw you in your apartment in the Rue Saint-Lazare, now that the doors of the Labinski mansion stand wide open before you, and that you no longer fear that Prascovia will close your lips with her hand as she did in the Villa Salviati, when you desire to speak to her of your love! You see that old Balthazar Cherbonneau, with his ape-like face, that he might exchange for any other, were he so minded, has not a few pretty good recipes up his sleeve."

"Doctor," replied Octavius-Labinski, "you have the power of a god or of a fiend, at the least."

"Be not in the least degree alarmed; there is no devilment in all this, and your eternal salvation is in no wise endangered. I have no intention of making you sign a contract with your blood. What has taken place is the simplest thing possible. The Word that created the light can surely transfer a soul, and if men would only listen to God through time and space, they would do a good deal more, I can tell you."

"What amount of gratitude, of devotion, do I not owe you for this priceless service!"

"You owe me nothing at all. I became interested in you, and to an old Lascar like myself, burned by every sun, and steeled by events, to feel an emotion is a rare thing. You have revealed love to me, and you know that we dreamers, who are something of alchemists, something of wizards, and something of philosophers, are all more or less in quest of the absolute. But pray rise, move and walk about, and see whether your new skin does not feel tight here and there."

Octavius-Labinski obeyed the doctor's directions, and walked round the room a few times. He already felt less strange; though inhabited by another soul, the Count's body still felt the impulse of its former habits,

and the new guest relied upon these physical remembrances, for it was needful that he should assume the gait, the ways, and the gestures of the body's former owner.

"If I had not myself performed but now the transfer of your souls," said Dr. Cherbonneau with a laugh, "I could swear nothing out of the way had occurred this evening, and I should take you for the genuine, legitimate, and authentic Lithuanian Count Olaf Labinski, whose *ego* is still slumbering in yonder chrysalis that you have so contemptuously cast off. But it will soon be midnight; you had better be off, or Prascovia will scold you and accuse you of preferring baccarat or lansquenet to herself. You must not begin your wedded life with a quarrel; that would be a bad omen. Meanwhile I shall busy myself awaking your former frame with all the care and attention it deserves."

Perceiving the wisdom of the physician's remarks, Octavius-Labinski hastened out. At the foot of the steps were impatiently prancing the Count's splendid bay horses, which had covered the pavement with foam as they champed their bits. At the sound of the young man's steps, a splendid footman in green livery, of

the lost race of the heyducs, sprang to the carriage steps and let them down noisily. Octavius, who had started mechanically in the direction of his own modest brougham, settled himself in the great, splendid coupé, and told the footman, who passed the word to the coachman: "Home!" Scarcely was the carriage door shut when the curveting horses started off, while the worthy successor of the Almanzors and Azolans hung on to the broad braided bands with an agility that one would not have expected from so tall a man.

To such horses the distance between the Rue du Regard and the Faubourg Saint-Honoré is a mere trifle; they covered it in a few moments, and the coachman called out in a stentorian voice, "Gate!" The porter threw back the two huge leaves of the gate; the carriage passed through, and circling round a great sanded court, stopped with remarkable precision under an awning striped red and white. The court itself, as Octavius-Labinski noted with that rapidity of vision one acquires on certain solemn occasions, was vast, surrounded by symmetrical buildings, and lighted by bronze lamp-posts, the gas jets of which were in glass shades similar to those that formerly were used in the decoration of the Bucentaur. The court had more

the appearance of belonging to a palace than to a private mansion; orange trees in boxes, and worthy of figuring on the terrace at Versailles, were placed at regular intervals along the asphalt border that framed in the central sanded space.

The poor transformed lover, as he stepped upon the threshold, had to stop for a moment and to put his hand to his heart to stop its beating. He had indeed the body of Count Labinski, but that only. Every thought the brain had contained had fled with the soul of the former owner; the dwelling that was henceforth to be his own was unknown to him, and he was not acquainted with the internal arrangements of it. A stair faced him; he ascended it, trusting to luck, and prepared, if he made a mistake, to ascribe it to absent-mindedness.

The well-rubbed steps were dazzlingly white and set off the rich red of the Wilton carpet, held fast by gilded brass rods, that formed a soft way for the feet; flower-stands filled with exotic flowers stood on every step. A huge lamp traceried and open-worked, and hung from a heavy cord of purple silk, adorned with knots and tufts, sent shimmers of gold upon the walls covered with white stucco, polished like marble, and

cast floods of light upon a replica, by the sculptor himself, of one of Canova's most famous groups, "Love embracing Psyche."

The landing-place of the only story was paved with mosaics of precious workmanship, and on the walls, suspended by silken cords, were four paintings by Paris Bordone, Bonifazzio, Palma Vecchio, and Paolo Veronese, the pompous architectural style of which harmonised with the magnificence of the stairs.

From this landing-place opened a high door, covered with serge set off by gilded nails. Octavius-Labinski pushed it open and found himself in a vast antechamber where were dozing a dozen footmen in full livery; as he entered they rose as if moved by springs, and stood ranged along the walls, impassible as Oriental slaves.

He went on into a white and gold drawing-room next to the antechamber. There was no one there. Octavius rang the bell, and a maid appeared.

"Can her ladyship receive me?"

"Her ladyship is undressing just now, but she will see your lordship in a moment."

VII

LEFT alone with the body of Octavius de Saville, now inhabited by the soul of Count Olaf Labinski, Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau set about restoring life to the inert shape. After a few passes, Olaf-de Saville — I must be allowed to conjoin these two names in order to designate the dual nature of the person — emerged like a phantom from the limbo of the deep sleep, or catalepsy rather, which had held him, motionless and rigid, in the corner of the divan. He rose with an automatic motion yet undirected by his will, and staggered under the influence of the last effects of vertigo. Everything was turning around him; the incarnations of Vishnu were dancing a saraband upon the walls, and the figure of the old physician appeared under the form of the old sannyasi of Elephanta, waving his arms like the wings of a bird and rolling his blue eyes in orbs of brown wrinkles that looked like the frames of goggles. The strange sights he had beheld before falling into the magnetic trance were reacting upon his mind, and he

was returning but slowly to reality; he was like a sleeper suddenly awaking from a nightmare, and who still mistakes for spectres his clothes scattered upon the chairs, with a vague resemblance to human shapes, and the shining brass hooks of the curtains illumined by the reflection of the night-light, for the eyes of Cyclops.

Gradually the fanciful sight vanished and everything resumed its normal appearance. Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau was no longer a Hindoo penitent, but an ordinary doctor of medicine, smiling in the most commonplace way upon his patient.

"Are you satisfied, Count, with the few experiments I have had the pleasure of performing before you?" he asked in a tone of obsequious humility, in which a trace of irony might have been discerned. "I venture to hope you will not think your evening wasted, and that you will leave me convinced that all that is told of magnetism is not merely lies and trickery, as official science maintains."

Olaf-de Saville nodded in assent, and left the room accompanied by Dr. Cherbonneau, who bowed deeply to him at every door. The brougham came up to the entrance, shaving the steps, and the soul of the husband

of the Countess Labinski got into it without paying particular attention to the fact that it was neither the Labinski carriage nor the Labinski livery.

The coachman inquired whither he should drive.

"Home," replied Olaf-de Saville, vaguely surprised at not recognising the voice of his green-coated footman, who usually asked that question in a most pronounced Hungarian accent.

The brougham in which he found himself was lined with dark blue damask, while his own coupé was lined with buttercup yellow satin. The Count was struck by the difference, while accepting the fact as one does in dreams with customary objects that present themselves under widely different aspects, though they remain recognisable. He also felt himself shorter than usual; besides, he thought he had been in evening dress when he went to the physician's, yet now, though he had no recollection of having changed, he was dressed in a light summer coat that had never figured in his wardrobe. His mind suffered from strange discomfort, and his thoughts, so lucid that morning, were difficult to clear up. Attributing this strange condition to the extraordinary things he had beheld that evening, he ceased thinking about it, rested

his head in the corner of the carriage, and let himself float away into a vague reverie, a half-dozing state, which was neither sleep nor waking.

The sudden pulling up of the horse and the coachman's call of "Gate!" recalled him to himself. He lowered the window, put his head out, and saw by the light of the gas lamp an unknown street and a house which was not his own.

"Where the devil are you driving me to, you fool?" he cried. "This is not the Faubourg Saint-Honoré and Labinski House."

"Beg your pardon, sir," grumbled the coachman; "I had mistaken your directions."

And he drove off to the place indicated.

On the way the transfigured Count asked himself a number of questions to which he could give no satisfactory answers. How was it that his carriage had left without him, when he had given orders that it should wait? How did he happen to be in another man's carriage? He supposed that a slight touch of fever interfered with the clearness of his perceptions, or that perhaps the thaumaturgist doctor had made him breathe during his sleep, in order to make a deeper impression upon his credulity, a vial of hasheesh or

other intoxicating drug, the illusions caused by which would be dispelled by a night's sleep.

The carriage reached the Labinski mansion, but the porter, on being called, refused to open the gate, saying that there was no reception that evening, that the Count had been home for more than an hour, and that the Countess had retired to her apartments.

"Are you drunk or mad, you rascal?" cried Olaf-de Saville, as he sprang at the colossus who stood huge upon the threshold of the half-opened gate, like one of those bronze statues, told of in Arab tales, that prevent knights-errant from entering enchanted castles.

"It is you, my little man, that are drunk or mad," replied the porter, whose naturally crimson face turned purple with anger.

"You scoundrel," roared Olaf-de Saville; "but for my own self-respect —"

"You hold your tongue, or I'll smash you and throw out the pieces on the pavement," returned the giant. "It is of no use to turn nasty with me just because you have drunk one or two bottles of champagne too many."

Olaf-de Saville, exasperated, shoved the porter so roughly that he made good his ingress into the court.

Some of the footmen who had not yet gone to bed hurried up at the sound of the dispute.

"I dismiss you, you fool, you scoundrel, you rascal! I shall not allow you to remain the night. Away with you, or I shall kill you like a mad dog. Do not compel me to shed a low-born lackey's blood."

And the Count, dispossessed of his own body, sprang, with bloodshot eyes, foaming lips, and clenched fists, at the huge porter, who, catching in his one hand the two hands of his aggressor, almost crushed them in the grip of his short fingers, muscular and knotty like those of a mediæval torturer.

"Come, keep quiet," said the giant, good-natured at bottom, and who had nothing to dread from his assailant, whom he jerked now and then to force him to behave. "What is the sense of getting into such a state, when one is dressed like a gentleman, and of coming to kick up such a row at night in a respectable house? Good wine commands respect, and it must have been prime liquor that you got drunk on. That is why I do not break your head for you, and why I shall be satisfied with chucking you into the street, where the watch will pick you up if you keep up your racket. A little cooling in the jug will do you no harm."

"Wretches," cried Olaf-de Labinski; "is this how you allow this infamous scoundrel to insult your master, the noble Count Labinski?"

The servants hooted unanimously on hearing this name, and a vast, Homeric, irresistible laugh broke from all the braided breasts.

"The poor fellow thinks he is Count Labinski! Ha! ha! ho! ho! that is a good joke!"

A cold sweat broke out on Olaf-de Saville's face; a sharp thought flashed through his brain like a steel blade, and he felt himself grow cold to the marrow. Had Smarra pressed its knee upon his breast, or was he really alive? Had his reason disappeared within the sombre sea of magnetism, or was he the plaything of some abominable machination? None of his lackeys, so trembling, submissive, and humble in his presence, seemed to recognise him. Had his body been changed for him like his clothes and his carriage?

"You may be quite sure you are not Count Labinski," said one of the most insolent in the crowd; "for look yonder, there he comes himself, attracted by the row you have been making."

The porter's prisoner looked to the end of the court and saw standing under the awning a young man of

slender and elegant stature, with an oval face, black eyes, aquiline nose, and slight mustache, who was no other than himself or his double, modelled by the devil, and so like as utterly to deceive one.

The porter released his hands; the footmen respectfully drew up against the wall, eyes down, hands by their sides, absolutely motionless, like icoglans when a pasha approaches. They were paying to the phantom the honours they refused to the real Count.

Prascovia's husband, bold as a Slav though he was, and there are none bolder, felt indescribable terror at the approach of that Dromio, who, more terrible than his stage compeer, mingled in real life and rendered his twin unrecognisable. His terror was increased by the recollection of a family legend that came back to his memory. Every time a Labinski was about to die, he was warned of the fact by the apparition of a phantom identically like unto him. Among Northern nations, it has always been held that for a man to see his double, even in a dream, is an omen of death, so that the intrepid warrior of the Caucasus, at the sight of this external vision of himself, was filled with invincible superstitious horror, and while he would not have hesitated to plunge his arm into the muzzle

of a cannon ready to be fired, he drew back from himself.

Octavius-Labinski drew near his former body, in which the Count's soul was struggling and shivering with indignation, and said to it in a tone of haughty and icy politeness: —

"Sir, cease to lower yourself by disputing with my servants. If you wish to see me, I am at home from twelve to two in the day, and the Countess receives on Thursdays the persons who have had the honour of being presented to her."

Having spoken these words slowly and with due accent on every syllable, the sham Count withdrew quietly and the doors closed behind him.

The footmen placed in his carriage Olaf-de Saville, who had fainted. When he recovered his senses, he was lying on a bed that was not of the shape of his own, in a room in which he could not recollect having ever entered, and by him was a strange servant holding his head and making him breathe ether.

"Are you better, sir?" asked John of the Count, whom he took for his master.

"Yes," replied Olaf-de Saville; "it was but a passing faintness."

"Shall I go now, sir, or sit up?"

"Do not sit up; leave me alone. Only, before you go, relight the candles by the mirror."

"Will not the bright light keep you from sleeping, sir?"

"Not in the least; besides, I am not sleepy yet."

"I shall not go to bed, sir, and if you happen to need anything, I shall be with you as soon as you ring," said John, inwardly disturbed by the pallor and the altered features of the Count.

When John had withdrawn after lighting the candles, the Count sprang to the mirror, and in the deep, clear crystal in which quivered the scintillation of the lights, he saw a young, gentle, sad face, with long black hair, dark blue eyes, pale cheeks, covered with a light downy, silky, brown beard, a head that was not his own, and that looked at him out of the mirror with an air of wonderment.

At first he tried to believe that some practical joker had framed a face in the brass and mother-of-pearl inlaid frame of the bevelled mirror; but on passing his hand over the back, he felt only the boards of the wainscotting. There was no one there.

His hands, which he felt, were thinner, longer, and more veined; on the ring finger stood out a large gold ring set with aventurine, on which was engraved a coat of arms — a shield fasced gules and argent, and above it a baron's coronet. This ring had never belonged to the Count, whose arms were or, an eagle displayed, beaked and armed of the same, with the pearl coronet on top. He looked through his pockets, and found a note-book containing visiting-cards with the name Octavius de Saville engraved upon them.

The laughter of the domestics at his mansion, the apparition of his double, the unknown face substituted for his own reflection in the mirror, might have been, after all, but hallucinations of a diseased brain, but the different clothes, the ring on his finger, were patent, palpable, material proofs which it was impossible to reject. A complete metamorphosis had taken place in him without his being aware of it; some wizard, unquestionably, a demon, perchance, had robbed him of his form, his rank, his name, his whole individuality, and had left him but his soul without the means of manifesting it.

The fantastic stories of Peter Schlemyl and of Saint

Sylvester's Eve returned to his mind, but the characters in the tales of Lamotte-Fouqué and Hoffmann had lost merely, the one his shadow, the other his reflection, and even if the strange lack of a projection enjoyed by every one else gave rise to odd suspicions, no one at least denied that these men were themselves. His condition was far worse. He could not claim his title of Count Labinski under the form in which he was imprisoned. Everybody would take him for an impudent impostor or for a madman at the very least. His wife herself would not recognise him in that lying garb. What means had he of proving his identity? Undoubtedly there were numberless private circumstances, innumerable secret details unknown to any one else which, were he to recall them to Prascovia, would enable her to recognise her husband's soul in that disguise, but what would be the value of that single acknowledgment, supposing he succeeded in obtaining it, in the face of unanimous opinion to the contrary? He was really and completely dispossessed of his own self. Then he had another cause of anxiety. Did the metamorphosis confine itself to an external change in his height and his features, or was he in truth dwelling in another man's body? In that case, what had become

of his own? Had it been thrown into a pit with quick-lime, or had it been appropriated by some bold thief? The double he had seen at the Labinski mansion might be a spectre, a vision, but it might also be a living being, installed in the frame which the fakir-looking physician, with his infernal skill, had robbed him of.

A hideous thought, that stung him like an adder's bite, occurred to him: "That fictitious Count Labinski, made in my likeness by the hands of the fiend, that vampire who now inhabits my mansion, whom my servants obey even against me, may be at this very moment entering with his cloven hoof into that room which I have never entered without feeling the same emotion as on the first night, and Prascovia may be gently smiling at him, and bending with divine blushes her lovely head upon that shoulder of his, branded with the devil's own sign-manual, — believing that that lying larva, that ghoul, that empusa, that hideous child of night and hell is myself! Why should I not run to the mansion, set fire to it, and shout through the flames to Prascovia: "You are being deceived. It is not your beloved Olaf whom you are pressing to your heart! You are about to commit innocently an abomi-

nable crime, that my despairing soul will remember even when eternity wearies of turning over its hour-glass!"

The hot blood surged to the Count's brain; he uttered inarticulate cries of rage; he bit his fists and stormed round the room like a wild beast. Madness had nearly destroyed the dim self-consciousness he had left. He ran to Octavius' dressing-table, filled a basin with water, plunged his head into it and drew it out steaming.

He recovered his coolness, and said to himself that the days of witchcraft and magic were past; that death alone can part the body and the soul; that it was impossible to kidnap in such a fashion, in the very centre of Paris, a Polish Count with a millionaire's balance at Rothschild's; one who was allied to the greatest houses, the beloved husband of a fashionable lady, a nobleman who wore the star of the first class of the order of Saint Andrew; that the whole business was no doubt a practical joke in very bad taste played upon him by Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau, which could be explained in the most natural way possible, like the terrors in Anne Radcliffe's novels.

As he was nearly dead of fatigue, he threw himself

down on Octavius' bed and slept a heavy, deep, death-like sleep, from which he had not aroused when John, thinking his master must have awakened, came in with the letters and morning papers.

VIII

THE Count opened his eyes and cast a comprehensive glance around him. He saw a comfortable, though simple bedroom; a spotted carpet, imitating a leopard's skin, covered the floor; tapestry curtains, just drawn aside by John, hung by the windows and concealed the doors; the walls were hung with plain velvety green paper in imitation of cloth, a clock, formed of a single block of black marble, with a platinum dial, surmounted by an oxidised silver reduction by Barbedienne of the statuette of Diana of Gabies, and flanked by two antique cups, also of silver, adorned the mantel of the white, blue-veined, marble chimneypiece. The Venetian mirror in which the Count had discovered the evening before that he no longer owned his customary face, and the portrait of an old woman, by Flandrin, — no doubt that of Octavius' mother, — were the only ornaments of the somewhat gloomy and sober room. A divan, an easy-chair by the chimney, a desk, covered with papers and books, furnished it comfortably, but

in no wise recalled the splendours of the Labinski residence.

"Are you going to rise, sir?" said John, in the soft voice he had studied to acquire during the time Octavius had been ill, and presenting to the Count the coloured shirt, the flannel trousers, and the Algerian gandoura which his master was in the habit of wearing in the morning. Although the Count disliked wearing a stranger's clothes, he had to accept those brought in by the servant, if he did not want to go nude; so he stepped down upon the silky black bear-robe placed by the bedside.

He dressed quickly, and John, who apparently had not the least doubt of the identity of the fictitious Octavius de Saville whom he was helping to dress, said to him: —

"At what time will you have breakfast, sir?"

"At the usual time," replied the Count, who, in order to be free to take such steps as he might determine upon for the recovery of his individuality, had resolved to accept, as far as outward seeming went, his incomprehensible metamorphosis.

The servant withdrew, and Olaf-de Saville opened the two letters that had been brought with the papers,

hoping to learn something from them. The first contained friendly reproofs, and complained of a causeless break in pleasant comradeship. It was signed with a name unknown to the Count. The second was from Octavius' lawyer and urged him to draw the amount of a quarter's income, long since paid in, or to give instructions, at least, as to the manner in which he desired the sum, at present lying useless, to be invested.

"It would seem," said the Count to himself, "that the Octavius de Saville whose body I am inhabiting, very much against my will, does really exist. He is no mere creation of the fancy; he has rooms, friends, a lawyer, an income, all that constitutes the existence and social position of a gentleman. And yet I am sure that I am Count Labinski."

But a single glance at the mirror sufficed to convince him that no one else would share that belief. In the bright light of day, as in the less brilliant light of the candles, the reflection given back was one and the same.

At this moment John entered, announcing Mr. Alfred Humbert, who came into the room with the familiarity of an old friend, without waiting until the man had returned with his master's answer.

"Good-morning," said the new-comer, a handsome young fellow with a frank, cordial look. "What are you doing with yourself? Are you dead or alive? you go nowhere and you leave my letters unanswered. I ought really to cut you, but I own that in matters of friendship I have no self-love, so I have come to inquire after you; for, devil take it, a man cannot let his old school chum die of melancholy in rooms as gloomy as Charles V's cell in the Yuste monastery.

"You fancy you are ill, but you are merely bored; so I mean to compel you to have a change, and I am going to take you, whether you will or not, to a jolly breakfast given by Gustave Raimbaud before he abdicates the freedom of bachelorhood."

And while saying this in a tone half of annoyance, half of amusement, he vigorously shook, in English fashion, the hand of the Count.

"Excuse me," replied the Count, entering into the spirit of his part, "I am worse to-day than usual, and do not feel up to the breakfast. I should only cast a damper on the company and be in the way."

"Well, I must say you do look pale and tired out. So be it, then; and let us look forward to another opportunity. I must be off, for I am three dozen

green oysters and one bottle of Sauterne late," said Alfred Humbert as he walked to the door. "Raimbaud will be sorry not to see you."

The visit increased the Count's wretchedness. John took him for his master, and Alfred for his friend. But one last test had to be gone through with. The door opened, and a lady, whose hair was streaked with silver, entered. She was strikingly like the portrait hanging on the wall. She sat down on the divan, and said to the Count: —

"How are you to-day, my poor Octavius? John told me you had come home last night in an alarming state of weakness. Do take care of yourself, my dear son, for you know how much I love you, in spite of the grief caused me by that inexplicable sadness the secret of which you will not confide to me."

"Do not fear, mother," replied Olaf de Saville. "It is nothing, and I feel much better to-day."

Madame de Saville, reassured, rose and went out, desiring not to trouble her son, whose dislike to be disturbed in his solitude by a prolonged call she was aware of.

"I am unquestionably Octavius de Saville," cried the Count when the old lady had gone. "His mother

recognises me and does not suspect that there is another soul in her son's body. I am perhaps for ever enclosed in this frame. A strange prison for the spirit is another man's body! Yet it is hard to give up being Count Olaf Labinski; to lose my rank, my wife, my fortune, and to be condemned to a pitiful middle-class existence. But I swear that I shall rid myself of that Dejanira's robe that clings to my *ego*, and it shall be in tatters that I shall return it to its former owner. Suppose I were to go back to my home? No! I had better not; I should only make a scene, and the porter would throw me out, for I am weak as a child in that invalid's dressing-gown. But come, let me look around a little, for I must learn something of the life of that Octavius de Saville, whom I have now become."

Whereupon he tried to open the note-book, the spring of which he happened to touch, and from the pockets he drew first a number of papers, covered with a close, small handwriting, and next a square of vellum. On this square, an unskilful but correct hand had traced, with the memory of the heart and with a success not always attained even by great artists, a pencil portrait of Countess Prascovia

Labinski, which it was impossible not to recognise at a glance.

The Count was thunderstruck at this discovery. His surprise was followed by a furious rush of jealousy. How did the Countess' portrait happen to be in that unknown young man's pocket-book? Whence did it come? Who had drawn it? Who had given it to him? Could his Prascovia, religiously worshipped by him, have descended from her heaven of love to indulge in an intrigue? By what infernal trick did he, the husband, come to be incarnated in the body of the lover of the woman he had hitherto believed so pure? He had been the husband and now he was to be the lover! That was a sarcastic metamorphosis with a vengeance; a change to drive a man mad. He would be in a position to fool himself; to be at once the betrayer and the betrayed!

These thoughts stormed tumultuously through his brain. He felt his reason leaving him, and summoned up all his strength of will to recover his self-command. Without heeding John, who came to inform him that breakfast was served, he continued his feverish examination of the mysterious pocket-book.

The papers formed a sort of psychological journal,

left off and resumed at different times. Here are a few extracts, which the Count perused with anxious curiosity: —

"Never will she love me; never, never! I have read in her eyes that are so sweet those words than which Dante could find none more cruel for the inscription on the brazen gates of his City of Sorrows: 'All hope abandon.' What have I done to God that I should be damned alive? To-morrow, and to-morrow, it will be the same! The planets may interlace their orbits, the stars in conjunction may form knots, but my fate will remain unchanged. With a single word, she has dispelled my dream; with one gesture she has broken the wings of my fancy. The fabulous combinations of impossibilities hold no chances for me; the numbers, were they cast a million times in the wheel of fortune, would not come out to my advantage. There is no winning number for me!"

"Unfortunate wretch that I am! I know that Paradise is closed to me, and yet I remain foolishly seated on the threshold, my back against the gate, which will never open; and I weep in silence, steadily, without an effort, as if mine eyes were springs of living waters. I have not the courage to arise and to go down into

the mighty desert or to enter into the tumultuous Babel of men."

"Sometimes, at night, when I cannot sleep, I think of Prascovia. When I do sleep, it is of her I dream. Oh! how beautiful she was that day in the garden of the Villa Salviati in Florence! Her white dress and her black ribbons, at once lovely and funereal! The white for her, the black for me! At times the ribbons, fluttering in the breeze, formed a cross upon that background of dazzling whiteness. An invisible spirit sang the Requiem Mass of my heart."

"Were some incredible catastrophe to place on my brow the crown of an Emperor or a Caliph, were the earth to pour out for me the gold of its veins, were I free to pillage at will the sparkling gems of Golconda and Vishapur, were Byron's lyre to sound under my hand, were the most perfect masterpieces of antiquity and of modern art to lend me their beauties, were I to discover a new world, I should be no better off for all that!"

"What is fate? I meant to go to Constantinople; then I should not have met her; I remained in Florence, I saw her and I am dying."

"I would have killed myself, but that she breathes

the air in which I live, and mayhap my eager lips will drink in — oh, bliss ineffable! — a faint breath of her balmy breath. Besides, my guilty soul would have been exiled to some distant planet, and I should have lost the chance of being loved by her in another life. Dread thought! I might have been separated from her yonder: she in heaven and I in hell!"

"Why should I have fallen in love with the one and only woman who cannot feel love for me? Others, said to be beautiful, and who were free, have smiled on me with their tenderest smile and seemed to invite a confession that was never made. Oh! happy is he, her husband! What sublime anterior life did he lead that God has rewarded him with the gift of that glorious love?"

There was no need of reading more. The suspicions that had arisen in the Count's mind at the sight of the portrait, had vanished at the perusal of the first few lines of these sad confidences. He understood that the beloved face, drawn again and again, had been caressed, far from the model, with the indefatigable patience of unrequited love; that it was the Madonna of a little mystic chapel, before which knelt hopeless adoration.

"But suppose this Octavius entered into a pact with the devil to rob me of my body, and to surprise Prascovia's love under my disguise!"

The absurdity of such a notion, in the nineteenth century, quickly caused the Count to put it aside, though it caused him considerable distress.

Smiling at his own credulity, he ate the breakfast, now cold, served by John, dressed, and called for his carriage. As soon as it was brought round, he had himself driven to Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau's; he traversed the rooms he had entered the night before under the name of Count Olaf Labinski, and whence he had gone out called Octavius de Saville by every one. The doctor was seated, as usual, on the divan at the end of the farthermost room, his foot in his hand, and apparently sunk in deep meditation.

At the sound of the Count's steps he looked up.

"Ah! it is you, my dear Octavius. I was just coming round to see you, but it is a good sign when the patient comes himself to see his doctor."

"Octavius again," said the Count. "It will drive me mad!"

Then, crossing his arms, he stood in front of the physician, and looking at him fixedly and fiercely, said:

"You know very well, Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau, that I am not Octavius, but Count Olaf Labinski; for you yourself, last night, in this very place, robbed me of my body by your outlandish witchcraft."

On hearing these words the doctor broke out into a loud guffaw, threw himself back on his cushions, and held his sides with his hands to moderate his laughter.

"Repress, sir, that most untimely mirth, which you may have cause to repent. I am speaking seriously."

"So much the worse; that shows that the anæsthesia and the hypochondria for which I am treating you are turning to dementia. I shall have to change the treatment."

"I do not know, you physician of Satan, why I do not strangle you with my own hands," roared the Count, striding towards Cherbonneau.

The physician smiled at the Count's threat, and touched him with a small steel wand. Olaf-de Saville felt a terrible shock and thought his arm was broken.

"We have ways of quieting patients when they grow troublesome," said he, at the same time casting upon him the look, cold as an ice-water douche, that

tames maniacs and compels lions to crawl on their bellies. "Go home, take a bath, and your excitement will pass away."

Olaf-de Saville, stunned by the shock, left the doctor's place, more uncertain than ever and more troubled than before. He had himself driven to Passy, to consult Dr. B——.

"I am," he said to the famous physician, "a prey to a strange hallucination. When I look at myself in the glass, my face does not appear to me with its usual features; the forms of the objects around me are changed; I recognise neither the walls nor the furniture of my room. I seem to be another person than myself."

"Under what form do you see yourself?" asked the physician. "The error may be due to the eyesight or to the brain."

"I see myself with black hair, dark blue eyes, and a pale face with a beard."

"Your description in your passport could not be more accurate. You are suffering neither from intellectual hallucination nor from disease of the sight. You are, as a matter of fact, such as you describe yourself."

"But that is not so; naturally I have fair hair, dark eyes, tanned complexion, and a sharp-pointed mustache."

"Now," answered the physician, "we are coming upon a slight affection of the intellectual faculties."

"Yet, doctor, I am not mad!"

"No doubt; it is only those who are in full possession of their senses who call upon me. Fatigue, or excess of study or of pleasure is the cause of the disturbance. You are mistaken; the vision itself is the reality, and the notion is the fancy. Instead of being a fair-haired man who thinks himself dark, you are a dark-haired man who thinks himself fair."

"I am nevertheless sure that I am Count Olaf Labinski; yet, since yesterday, every one calls me Octavius de Saville."

"Just what I was telling you," answered the physician; "you are Mr. de Saville and you fancy you are Count Labinski, whom I remember seeing and who is, as you say, fair. That quite explains how it is you see another face than yours in the glass. That face, which is your own, does not correspond with your inward belief and it causes you surprise. Pray note that every one calls you Mr. de Saville, and consequently does not share your belief. Come and

spend a fortnight here; bathing, resting, and walks under the trees will soon overcome your unfortunate delusion."

The Count bowed and promised to return. He knew not what to believe. He returned to the apartment in the Rue Saint-Lazare, and by chance caught sight of the Countess' invitation which Octavius had shown to Dr. Cherbonneau.

"With that talisman," he cried, "I can see her to-morrow!"

IX

WHEN the footmen had borne to his carriage the true Count Labinski, driven from his earthly Paradise by the sham guardian angel standing on its threshold, the metamorphosed Octavius re-entered the small white and gold drawing-room to await the Countess' pleasure.

As he leaned against the white marble mantel, the hearth of which was filled with flowers, he saw himself reflected in the mirror symmetrically placed upon a pier table with carved and gilded feet. Although he was aware of the secret of his metamorphosis, or, to speak more accurately, of his transposition, he found it difficult to believe that that image, so different from his own, was the double of his figure, and he could not take his eyes off the phantom which, nevertheless, was himself. He looked at himself and saw another man. Involuntarily he turned to see whether Count Olaf was not leaning near him on the shelf of the mantel and whether it was not his reflection he saw in the mirror. He was quite alone,

however, and Dr Cherbonneau had performed his work conscientiously.

In a few moments Octavius-Labinski ceased to think of the wonderful avatar by which his soul had passed into the body of Prascovia's husband, and his thoughts turned into a channel more suitable to his circumstances. An incredible event, which the most fantastic hope would not have ventured to dream of, even in delirium, had happened! He was about to find himself in the presence of the beauty he worshipped, and she would not repel him! The one and only combination which could conciliate his happiness and the Countess' immaculate virtue had been brought about!

At this supreme moment, he suffered in his soul dreadful anxiety and anguish. The timidity of true love made him faint as though that soul still dwelt in the rejected form of Octavius de Saville. The maid's entrance cut short the contention of his emotions. As she drew near he could not repress a nervous start, and his blood rushed back to his heart as the girl said to him: —

"Her ladyship is ready to see your lordship."

Octavius-Labinski followed the maid, for he was not acquainted with the interior arrangement of the man-

sion, and wished not to betray his ignorance by any uncertainty in his motions.

The maid showed him into a fairly large dressing-room adorned with all the refinement of the most tasteful luxury. A number of wardrobes, in costly woods, carved by Knecht and Lienhart, the doors of which were separated by twisted pillars around which wound the spirals of light tendrils of convolvuli, with their heart-shaped leaves and their bell-like flowers, cut out with infinite skill, formed a sort of architectural wainscotting, a portico of rare elegance and marvellous execution. In these wardrobes were kept the silk and velvet gowns, the Cashmere shawls, the capes, the laces, the pelisses of zibeline marten, the many-shaped bonnets, in a word, the whole arsenal of a lovely woman.

On the opposite side of the room the same motive was repeated, save that the panels were filled with mirrors that swung on hinges, like screens, so that the owner might have a front, side, or back view of herself, and judge of the effect of her bodice or her head-dress.

On the third side stood a long toilet-table overlaid with alabaster onyx, with silver faucets that poured

hot or cold water into immense Japanese basins set in silver; Bohemian glass bottles, that sparkled like diamonds and rubies in the light of the tapers, contained essences and scents.

The walls and the ceiling were hung with sea-green silk, like the inside of a jewel-case, while a thick Smyrna carpet, with soft harmonious tints, covered the floor.

In the centre of the room, on a pedestal of green velvet, was placed a great casket, of chased Khorassan steel, inlaid and covered with arabesques so complicated that by the side of them the ornaments of the Hall of Ambassadors in the Alhambra were simple. Eastern art seemed to have attained its highest point in that marvellous piece of work, which must have been wrought by fairy fingers. It was in this casket that Countess Labinski kept her jewels, gems worthy of a queen, but which she rarely wore, rightly thinking that they were not as beautiful as the form they covered. She was too beautiful to need gems, and her woman's instinct was correct in this respect. So she brought them out only on the solemn occasions when it was desirable that the hereditary splendours of the ancient house of Labinski

should be manifested. Never were diamonds so seldom worn.

Near the window, the full curtains of which fell in broad folds, in front of a dressing-table, opposite a mirror held by two cherubs carved by Mlle. de Fauveau, and marked by that lissom, slender elegance characteristic of her work, sat, in the brilliant light of two candelabra with six tapers, Countess Prascovia Labinski, in all the radiance of her blooming loveliness. She wore a soft, cloud-like Tunis burnouse, of incredible fineness, striped with blue and white stripes, alternately opaque and transparent. The light stuff had slipped off the satiny shoulders and allowed to be seen the upper portion of a neck by comparison with which a swan's snowy neck would have seemed gray. Between the folds showed the lace of a cambric wrapper, a night robe fastened by no girdle. Her hair was let down and fell behind her in rich waves like an empress's cloak. Assuredly the tresses of fluid gold from which Venus Anadyomene shook pearls as she emerged in her shell like a sea-flower from the blue Ionian sea, were less fair, less thick, and less heavy. Mingle the amber of Titian and the silver of Paolo Veronese with the golden glaze of Rubens; make the sun's rays stream

through the topaz, and you will not even then reproduce the marvellous tone of that splendid hair, which seemed to give out light, instead of reflecting it, and which deserved, more than Berenice's hair, to blaze, a new constellation, among the stars of eld. Two maids were parting, smoothing, waving, and curling it in ringlets carefully arranged so that the contact of the ear should not disturb it.

While this delicate operation was going on, the Countess was making dance, on the tip of her foot, a slipper of white velvet, embroidered with gold braid, so small that it would have made the khanouns and odalisques of the Padishah jealous. Now and then, throwing back the soft folds of the burnouse, she uncovered her white arm and pushed back with her hand a stray lock, with a movement full of arch grace.

In her nonchalant pose she recalled those lissome figures of Greek toilets that adorn antique vases and which no artist has been able to reproduce in their pure and suave contours and their youthful and delicate beauty. She was infinitely more seductive than in the garden of the Villa Salviati in Florence, and had not Octavius been madly in love with her, he would have

now become so; happily, one can add nothing to the infinite.

At this sight Octavius-Labinski felt his knees give way under him as if he were beholding the most dread of spectacles. His tongue clave to the roof of his mouth, anguish clutched him by the throat like the hand of a Thug, and red flames passed before his eyes. The Countess's beauty petrified him.

He called up his courage, however, saying to himself that his bewildered, stupefied ways, while appropriate in a rejected lover, were wholly out of place in the case of a husband, however much he might be in love with his wife, and he therefore marched up to the Countess with fair resolution.

"So here you are, Olaf! How late you are to-night," said the Countess without turning round, for her head was held motionless by the four long tresses her women were busy plaiting; disengaging one of her fair hands from the folds of the burnouse, she held it out to him.

Octavius-Labinski took the hand, softer and fairer than a flower, raised it to his lips and imprinted upon it a long, ardent kiss, concentrating his whole soul upon that one little spot.

I know not what delicate sensitiveness, what instinctive, divine modesty, what spontaneous intuition of the heart warned the Countess, but her face, neck, and arms suddenly flushed rosy red, like virgin snow on lofty summits surprised by the first kiss of the sun. She started slightly and slowly drew away her hand, half angry, half ashamed; Octavius's lips had burned her like a red-hot iron. She soon recovered, however, and smiled at her own simplicity.

"You do not answer, dear Olaf. Do you know that I have not seen you for more than six hours? You are becoming neglectful," she added in a tone of reproach. "There was a time when you would not have left me to myself for a whole evening. I wonder whether you even bestowed one thought upon me."

"I thought of no one but you," replied Octavius-Labinski.

"Of no one but me? Oh, no. I feel it when you are thinking of me, even when you are away. This evening, for instance, I was alone, seated at the piano, playing a piece of Weber's and trying to lull my solitude with music. Your soul fluttered round me for a few minutes in the sonorous harmony of the notes, and then it flew away with the last chord,

whither I know not, and it did not return. Do not tell me any fibs; I know whereof I am speaking."

Nor was Prascovia mistaken; it was the moment when Count Olaf Labinski, in the rooms of Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau, was bending over the magic vase of water and evoking the face he adored with all the strength of his will. From that moment the Count, sunk in the fathomless ocean of magnetic sleep, had remained deprived of thought, of feeling, and of will.

The maids, having finished dressing the Countess for the night, withdrew. Octavius-Labinski remained standing, casting burning looks upon Prascovia. Troubled by these hot glances, the Countess wrapped herself in her burnouse as Polyhymnia in her draperies, her head alone, with an expression of anxiety over its loveliness, showing, above the white and blue folds.

Although no human penetration could possibly have informed her of the mysterious transfer of souls brought about by Dr. Cherbonneau, thanks to the formula of the sannyasi Brahma-Loghum, Prascovia did not recognise in the eyes of Octavius-Labinski the expression she was wont to note in Olaf's eyes, — that of a pure, quiet, equable love, eternal like that of the angels.

An earthly passion blazed in his glance, which troubled her and made her blush. She had no idea of what had occurred, but she was sure that something had happened. A thousand strange notions flashed through her brain. Had she become like unto a vulgar woman to Olaf, desired for her beauty, like a courtesan? Had the heavenly accord of their souls been broken by some dissonance she was unaware of? Did Olaf love another woman? Had the corruptions of Paris soiled his chaste heart? She asked herself these questions swiftly, unable to find a satisfactory answer to them, and saying to herself that she must be crazy, but at bottom feeling that she was right. Secret terror laid hold of her, as if she were in presence of some hidden danger revealed to her by the second sight of the soul, always to be trusted.

She rose, nervous and agitated, and walked towards her bedroom door. The sham Count accompanied her, his arm round her waist, like Othello whenever he accompanies Desdemona in one of her exits in Shakespeare's play; but when she reached the threshold, she turned, paused for a moment, white and cold as a statue, cast a frightened glance on the young man, entered, closed the door quickly, and shot the bolt.

"It is the glance of Octavius!" she cried, falling half fainting upon a sofa. When she came to herself, she said: —

"But how is it that that glance, the expression of which I have never forgotten, should flash this evening in Olaf's eyes? How comes it that its sombre and despairing fire gleams in my husband's look? Can Octavius be dead? Is it his soul that has shone for an instant before me as if to bid me farewell before leaving this earth? Oh! if I have foolishly yielded to vain terrors, Olaf, you will surely forgive me, but if I had received you to-night, I should have felt as though I were giving myself to another man."

The Countess made sure that the bolt was firmly secured, lighted the lamp hanging from the ceiling, nestled in her bed like a frightened child, and did not fall asleep until morning. Her sleep was disturbed by incoherent and strange dreams. Ardent eyes, the eyes of Octavius, blazed upon her out of a mist, while at the foot of her bed a black, wrinkled figure remained crouching, muttering words in an unknown tongue. Count Olaf also appeared in her absurd dream, but under a form that was not his own.

I shall not attempt to describe the disappointment of Octavius when he found himself on the wrong side of the closed door and heard the bolt shot. His last hope was destroyed. He had had recourse to strange and terrible means; he had yielded himself up to a wizard, to a fiend, mayhap, and perilled his life in this world and his soul in the next to conquer a woman who now escaped him, though delivered defenceless into his hands by Hindoo magic. Repelled as a lover he was repelled as a husband also. Prascovia's invincible purity set at naught the most infernal machinations. On the threshold of the sleeping chamber she had appeared to him as one of Swedenborg's white angels blasting the fiend.

He could not remain all night in that ridiculous situation. He therefore tried to find the Count's apartment, and, at the end of a number of rooms, he saw one in which stood a bedstead with ebony pillars and curtained with tapestry, on which, amid flowers and foliage were embroidered coats of arms. Trophies of Eastern weapons, breastplates and helmets on which fell the rays of a lamp, shone faintly in the shadows, and on the walls gleamed hangings of goffered Bohemian gilded leather. Three or four large carved arm-

chairs, a coffer covered with figures, completed this feudal furnishing, that would not have been out of place in the great hall of a Gothic manor. It was not a frivolous imitation of the fashion of the day on the Count's part, but a pious remembrance. The room was an exact reproduction of the one he had occupied in his mother's home, and although he had often been rallied on having a sort of fifth act stage setting, he had always refused to change the style of the furniture.

Octavius-Labinski, worn out by emotion and fatigue, threw himself on the bed, and fell asleep, cursing Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau. Happily brighter thoughts came to him with daylight; he resolved to behave more sensibly, to deaden the fire of his glance, and to assume the ways of a husband. Helped by the Count's valet, he dressed in quiet fashion and went with tranquil step to the breakfast-room, where the Countess was waiting for him.

X

OCTAVIUS–LABINSKI followed close upon the steps of the valet, for he did not know where lay the dining-room in that house of which he appeared to be the master. It was a large room on the ground-floor, opening out upon the court, in a noble and severe style that smacked both of an abbey and of a manor. A wainscotting of rich, warm, dark oak, divided symmetrically into panels and compartments, rose to the ceiling, the carved open beams of which formed sunken hexagonal panels painted blue, with light golden arabesques. In the long panels of the wainscotting Philippe Rousseau had painted the Four Seasons, symbolised, not by mythological figures, but by trophies of still life corresponding to each period of the year. These had for companion pieces hunting scenes by Jadin, while above each painting shone, like a round buckler, a huge dish by Bernard Palissy or Léonard de Limoges, or of Japanese porcelain, or of majolica, or of Arab pottery, the glaze of which was iridescent with all the colours of the prism. Heads

of stags and wild ox alternated with the porcelains, and at the two ends of the room rose great dressers, as high as the retables of Spanish churches, of stately design and so covered with carvings as to rival the finest works of Berruguete, Cornejo Duque, and Verbruggen. On their shelves glittered the medley of the old Labinski family plate, ewers with monsters for handles, old-fashioned salt-cellars, goblets, cups, centre-pieces of strange shapes in the German fanciful taste, worthy of taking their place in the Treasury of the Grüne Gewölbe at Dresden. Opposite this old plate scintillated the wondrous products of the modern goldsmith's art, the masterpieces of Wagner, Duponchel, Froment-Meurice, Rudolphi; silver-gilt tea services with figures by Feuchère and Vechte; inlaid salvers; champagne pails with handles formed of vine leaves; braziers as elegant as Pompeian tripods, besides Bohemian crystal ware, Venetian glass, and services in old Sèvres and old Dresden china.

Oaken chairs, covered with green morocco, were ranged along the walls. The table, the feet of which were carved in the shape of eagle's talons, was lighted by a soft, even light that came through the ground glass of the central sunk panel, left undecorated for the pur-

pose, and which was framed in by a wreath of vine leaves, the transparent green of which contrasted harmoniously with the milky whiteness of the panel itself.

On the table, set in the Russian fashion, fruits placed in a circlet of violets, were ready laid, while the meats awaited the knives of the guests under their covers of polished metal that shone like the helmets of emirs, and a Moscow samovar hissed out a jet of steam. Two lackeys, in knee-breeches and white neckties, stood motionless and silent behind the two arm-chairs that were placed opposite each other, like two statues of domesticity.

Octavius took in all these details at a glance in order not to be involuntarily preoccupied by the novelty of objects with which he was supposed to be perfectly familiar.

A sound of light footsteps on the floor and a rustle of taffeta made him turn his head: it was Countess Prascovia Labinski entering. She sat down after having nodded to him in friendly fashion. She wore a green and white checked silk wrapper, trimmed with a vandyke ruffle of the same stuff. Her thick hair fell in heavy bandeaux upon her temples and was knotted in a golden roll, like the volute of an Ionian capital, upon

her neck, forming a head-dress as simple as it was beautiful, and which even a Greek sculptor would not have altered. Her peach-like complexion was slightly paled by the emotions of the preceding evening and by her disturbed sleep; a faint pearly aureole encircled her eyes, usually so calm and clear. She looked tired and languorous, but this softening of her beauty made it all the more seductive and human. The goddess was more of a woman; the angel, having folded its wings, had ceased to soar.

Taught prudence by experience, Octavius deadened the fire in his eyes, and masked his ecstasy under an air of indifference.

The Countess thrust her little feet, shod with reddish brown slippers, into the silky wool of the thick, soft carpet placed under the table to neutralise the chilliness of the white marble and Verona brocatello mosaic, which formed the flooring of the room; shivered slightly, as if she felt a little touch of fever, and looking with her polar blue eyes at the guest whom she believed to be her husband — for daylight had driven away the presentiments, terrors, and phantoms of night — she addressed him in a tender, harmonious voice, full of chaste endearment — but in Polish! It was her custom

to use her beloved mother-tongue when speaking to the Count in moments of sweet intimacy, especially in presence of their French servants who were unacquainted with that language.

Now Octavius, a thoroughbred Parisian, knew Latin, Italian, Spanish, and a little English, but like all Gallo-Romans, he was utterly ignorant of Slavic tongues. The consonantal *chevaux-de-frise* which stand guard upon the rare Polish vowels would have prevented his learning the language, even had he attempted to do so. In Florence the Countess had always spoken to him in French or Italian, and it had never occurred to him to learn the tongue in which Miskiewicz almost equalled Byron. One cannot think of everything.

As he heard the words, there took place a very singular phenomenon in the Count's brain, wherein dwelt at the time Octavius' *ego*. The sounds, foreign to the Parisian, entered the windings of the Slavic ear, reached the spot where Olaf's soul was accustomed to receive and translate them into thoughts, and there awakened a sort of physical memory. Their meaning was dimly apparent to Octavius; words hidden away in the convolutions of the brain, at the bottom of the secret drawers of memory, came buzzing out, ready to reply,

but these vague reminiscences, not being placed in communication with the mind, speedily vanished, and all was dark. Painful was the poor lover's embarrassment, for he had not thought of these complications when he had entered into the body of Count Olaf Labinski, and he realised that the man who steals another's form exposes himself to unpleasant discomfiture.

Prascovia, astonished at Octavius' silence, and taking for granted that his thoughts were wandering, repeated the remark, which she supposed he had not heard.

While he heard the sound of the words more clearly, the sham Count failed to grasp their meaning any better. He strove desperately to make out what the Countess was talking about, but to the man who is ignorant of them, the tongues of the North are absolutely unintelligible, and though a Frenchman may gather what it is that an Italian is saying to him, he is like a deaf man when addressed by a Pole. In spite of himself, a burning blush overspread his features; he bit his lips, and to save appearances, he cut viciously at the meat on his plate.

"Really, my dear lord," said the Countess, "it seems as though you did not hear or did not understand me."

"Quite so," stammered Octavius-Labinski, not knowing what he was uttering; "that devilish tongue is so difficult."

"It may be difficult for foreigners, I grant you; but to one who learned it at his mother's knee, it is like the very breath of life, the very effluvium of thought."

"You are right; yet there are times when it seems to me that I have forgotten it."

"What are you saying, Olaf? What! *you*, forget the tongue of your forefathers, the speech of your blessed country, the tongue by which you know your brethren among men, and," she added in a lower tone, "the tongue in which you first told me that you loved me!"

"I am so used now to another tongue —" ventured Octavius-Labinski, driven into a corner.

"Olaf," replied the Countess, in a tone of reproach, "I see that Paris has spoiled you. I was right not to wish to come here. Who would have ventured to say at that time that when the noble Count Labinski returned to his estates he would be unable to reply to the congratulations of his vassals in his own language?"

An expression of grief saddened Prascovia's lovely face, and for the first time in her life sorrow cast its

shadow over her brow pure as an angel's. The Count's amazing loss of memory hurt the deepest feelings of her soul and appeared to her almost in the light of a treason.

The breakfast ended in silence, for Prascovia was annoyed with him she took for her husband. As for Octavius, he was in torment, fearing other questions to which he would be unable to make any reply. The meal over, the Countess rose and returned to her apartments.

Octavius, left alone, played with the handle of a knife which he felt like driving into his heart, so intolerable was his position. He had reckoned on surprising the Countess, and instead he found himself involved in the closed maze of a life he knew nothing of. When he had assumed the body of Count Olaf Labinski, he now felt he ought to have also robbed him of his thoughts, of the languages he knew, of his remembrances of childhood, of the innumerable secret matters that go to the making of a man's *ego*, which are the bonds that connect his existence with that of others. But to do this even the marvellous learning of Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau would have proved insufficient. It was maddening to him to find himself in a Paradise

the very threshold of which he had scarce dared to look at from afar; to inhabit the same dwelling as Prascovia, to see her, to speak to her, to kiss her lovely hand with her own husband's very lips, and yet to be unable to lull her sense of celestial modesty, and to go on betraying himself every minute by some amazing piece of stupidity.

"It was written above that Prascovia should never love me! yet have I made the greatest sacrifice to which human pride could consent: I have renounced my own individuality and shown myself willing to obtain, under a form that is not mine, endearments meant for another man!"

At this point his monologue was broken in upon by a groom who, bowing to him with every mark of the deepest respect, asked him what horse he proposed to ride.

As he did not reply, the groom, trembling at his own audacity, ventured to murmur: —

"Vultur or Rustem? Neither of them has been out for a week."

"Rustem," answered Octavius Labinski, as indifferently as he would have said Vultur; because it was the last name that had fallen upon his inattentive ear.

He dressed for the ride and went off to the Bois de Boulogne to see if the air would calm his nervousness.

Rustem, a splendid animal of the Nedji breed, who wore on his breast, in an Eastern sachet, embroidered in gold, his titles of nobility that went back to the earlier years of the Hegira, needed no spur. He seemed to enter into his rider's thoughts, and, as soon as he had left the paved streets and felt the smoother ground, he went off like an arrow without Octavius having to urge him on. After a mad gallop of a couple of hours, horse and rider returned to the mansion, the one calmed down, the other steaming and with reddened nostrils.

The sham Count entered the Countess's apartments and found her in her drawing-room, dressed in a white taffeta dress flounced to the waist, and a knot of ribbons in her hair just by her ear, for it happened to be a Thursday, the day she was at home to visitors.

"Well," said she to him with a gracious smile, for she could not long keep a pout upon her lovely lips; "has your memory returned in the course of your ride in the Bois?"

"Unfortunately not, my dear," replied Octavius-Labinski. "But I have a confession to make to you."

"Why confess to me? Do I not read all your thoughts? Are we not transparent as the day to each other?"

"Yesterday I went to see that physician of whom people are talking so much."

"I know the man; Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau, who lived so long in India and there learned, it is said, from the Brahmins any number of secrets, every one more wonderful than the others. You wanted me to go with you, but I am not curious. I know you love me, and that knowledge is sufficient for me."

"He performed in my presence such strange experiments, he worked such prodigies, that my mind is even yet upset by them. That extraordinary man, who enjoys irresistible power, plunged me into so deep a magnetic sleep that when I woke I found I had not the same faculties as before. I had lost all recollection of many things; the past was shrouded in a thick mist; my love for you alone had remained unimpaired."

"You did wrong, Olaf, to submit to that man's influence. God, who created the soul, alone has the right to act upon it. When man attempts to do so, he commits an impious action," said Countess Prascovia Labinski, gravely. "I hope you will not go to

him again, and that when I say something sweet to you — in Polish — you will understand me as you used to do."

Octavius had thought out, while out riding, this excuse of magnetic influence with a view to palliating the mistakes he was certain to heap one upon another in his new life; but he was far from being out of the wood. A servant opened the door and announced a visitor.

"Mr. Octavius de Saville."

Although he must have reckoned on such a meeting taking place before long, the real Octavius turned as pale, on hearing these simple words, as if the trumpet of judgment had suddenly sounded in his ears. He had to call up all his courage and to remember that all the advantages were on his side, in order not to stagger. Mechanically he drove his finger-nails into the back of an arm-chair, and thus managed to remain standing and apparently firm and at his ease.

Count Olaf, under the form of Octavius, approached the Countess and bowed low before her.

"Count Labinski, Mr. Octavius de Saville," said the Countess, introducing the two gentlemen to each other.

The two men bowed coldly, exchanging fierce glances under the stony mask of mundane civility, which conceals at times the worst of passions.

"You have given me the cold shoulder since we met in Florence, Mr. Octavius," said the Countess in a voice at once friendly and familiar. "I feared I should not see you before leaving Paris. You were more assiduous at the Villa Salviati; you were one of my faithful visitors."

"Madam," replied in a constrained tone the sham Octavius, "I have been travelling; I have not been well; ill, indeed, and when I received your gracious invitation I hesitated to avail myself of it, for one must not be selfish and take advantage of the indulgence shown to a bore."

"Bored you may be, but bore one you certainly do not," replied the Countess. "You have always been melancholy, but is it not one of your own poets who says of melancholy: 'Next to idleness it is the pleasantest of ills'?"

"That is what the happy say in order to save themselves the trouble of pitying those who suffer," returned Olaf-de Saville.

The Countess cast a glance full of inexpressible

sweetness upon the Count, concealed under Octavius' form, as if to beg his forgiveness for the love she had involuntarily inspired in him.

"You think me more frivolous than I really am. I do sympathise with every genuine sorrow, and if I cannot relieve it, I do at least share it. I wish you could have been happy, dear Mr. Octavius, but why have you shut yourself up alone with your grief, and obstinately refused life that presented itself to you with its happiness, enchantments, and duties? Why did you reject the friendship I offered you?"

These simple, frank words produced a different impression upon her two hearers. Octavius found in them the confirmation of the sentence passed upon him in the garden of the Villa Salviati, by those lovely lips that had never uttered a falsehood. Olaf, on the other hand, found in them additional proof of the unchanging virtue of his wife, who could fall only through a devilish artifice. Sudden, fierce rage filled him, therefore, at the sight of his double, animated by another soul than his own, and installed in his own house. He flew at the sham Count's throat.

"Robber, brigand, scoundrel, give me back my body!"

On seeing his extraordinary action the Countess rang with all her might, and the servants carried away the Count.

"That poor Octavius has gone mad," said the Countess, while Olaf, who was in vain struggling, was being led away.

"Yes, mad with love," replied the real Octavius. "Countess, you are really too beautiful."

XI

TWO hours after this scene, the sham Count received from the true one a letter sealed with Octavius' signet — the poor wretch had no other at hand. The opening of a missive sealed with his arms produced a curious impression upon the usurper of Olaf de Labinski's entity, but everything was bound to be singular in the abnormal position in which he found himself.

The letter contained the following lines, written in a constrained hand and in a writing that appeared counterfeit, for Olaf was not used to writing with Octavius' fingers : —

" Were any one else than you to read this letter, it would seem to have been indited in a lunatic asylum, but you will understand me. By an inexplicable concourse of circumstances, which perhaps never occurred since the earth first began to revolve around the sun, I am compelled to do what no man ever did. I have to write to myself, to inscribe on the address a name that belongs to me, a name that you have robbed me of at

the same time that you robbed me of my body. I do not know what are the foul machinations to which I have fallen a victim, or into what maze of infernal illusions I have stepped; you, no doubt, do know it. If you are not a coward, the muzzle of my pistol or the point of my sword shall ask that secret of you upon the ground where every man, whether a man of honour or a scoundrel, replies to the questions that are put to him. By to-morrow one of us must have ceased to see the light of the sun; this wide world is now too narrow to hold us both. I shall kill my body inhabited by an impostor's spirit, or you shall kill your own, in which my soul fumes at being imprisoned. Do not attempt to make me pass for a madman; I shall have the courage to be sensible, and wherever I may meet you, I shall insult you with the most high-bred politeness, with diplomatic coolness. Mr. Octavius de Saville may take a dislike to the mustaches of Count Olaf Labinski, and every day men tread on each other's toes on leaving the opera; but I trust that my words, though they will be obscure, will be in no wise ambiguous to you, and that my seconds will be able to agree fully with yours on the time, place, and conditions of our duel."

This letter threw Octavius into the deepest perplexity. He could not refuse the Count's challenge, and yet he felt the strongest repugnance at fighting with himself, for he had preserved a certain tenderness for his former frame. As, however, he might be compelled to assent to a meeting in consequence of some public insult, he decided to accept the challenge. Were he so minded, he could have his adversary put into a strait-jacket, and thus paralyse him, but he revolted at the thought of resorting to such extreme measures. It was true that, carried away by irresistible love, he had done a most reprehensible thing and concealed the lover under the form of the husband in order to triumph over a virtue that resisted every temptation, yet he was devoid neither of the sense of honour nor of courage. Besides, he had yielded only after three years of suffering and struggles, at a moment when his life, consumed by love, was abandoning him. He did not know the Count; he was not his friend; he owed him nothing; and he had profited by the risky means offered him by Dr. Cherbonneau.

But where was he to find seconds? Of course among the Count's friends; but Octavius, having spent

but a single day in the mansion, had had no opportunity to meet any of them.

On the chimney-piece stood two vases of craquelé céladon, the handles of which were formed of dragons. In the one were rings, scarf-pins, seals, and other jewels; in the other, visiting cards, on which, under coronets of dukes, marquesses, and counts, were engraved by skilful engravers, in round hand, in old English, in script, endless Polish, Russian, Hungarian, German, Italian, or Spanish names, that testified to the travelling habits of the Count, who had friends in every country on the face of the earth.

Octavius took the first that came to his hand: those of Count Zamoieczki and of the Marquis de Sepulveda. He ordered his carriage, drove to the house of each of them, and found them both at home, and not in the least surprised at the visit of him whom they took for Count Olaf Labinski. Absolutely free from the sentimentality of middle-class seconds, they did not inquire whether the quarrel could not be patched up, and asked no questions about its cause, like the well-bred men they were.

On the other hand, the real Count, or, if my reader prefer, the sham Octavius, was in just the same sort

of difficulty; he remembered, however, Alfred Humbert and Gustave Raimbaud, whose invitation to lunch he had declined, and he induced them to act for him on this occasion.

They showed some astonishment on learning that their friend, who had not left his room for nearly a year, and who they well knew was more disposed to peace than war, had a duel on his hands; but when he had told them that it was a fight to the death for a reason that must not be told, they raised no further objections, and proceeded to the Labinski mansion.

The conditions were soon settled, and the choice of weapons was decided by the toss of a gold piece, the two opponents having declared that swords or pistols would be equally acceptable to them. The time was set for six in the morning, and the place the Avenue des Poteaux, near the rustic pavilion with thatched roof and rustic pillars, in a clearing the hard sand soil of which offered the right kind of ground for a meeting of this sort.

By the time everything was settled it was nearly midnight, and Octavius proceeded to Prascovia's room. He found the bolt shot, as on the previous evening,

and the Countess rallied him in a mocking voice through the door: —

"Come back when you know Polish; I am too patriotic to allow a foreigner to join me in my room."

With the morning came Dr. Cherbonneau, whom Octavius had sent for, armed with a case of instruments and a package of bandages. They got into the carriage together. Count Zamoieczki and the Marquis de Sepulveda followed in a coupé.

"So, my dear Octavius," said the doctor, "your adventure is turning to a tragedy. I ought to have left the Count asleep on my divan for a week or so; I have kept people in a trance for a longer time than that; but although a man may have studied wisdom with the Brahmin, the pandits, and the sannyasys of India, he always will leave something forgotten, and his best laid plans prove defective in some particular. But tell me, how did Countess Prascovia receive her Florence lover under his disguise?"

"I believe," answered Octavius, "that she recognised me in spite of my metamorphosis, or else that her guardian angel whispered distrust of me in her ear; I found her as chaste, cold, and pure as the Polar snows. Under the beloved form, her exquisite soul no doubt

discerned a foreign soul. I was right when I told you that you could not help me; I am more unhappy even than when you first came to see me."

"There can be no limit set to the powers of the soul," said Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau pensively; "especially when it is untouched by earthly thoughts, free from all human filth, and remains such as it came from the Creator's hands in light, in the contemplation of love. Yes, you must be right and she recognised you; her angelic modesty shivered at the glance of desire, and instinctively folded its white wings about itself. I am sorry for you, my dear Octavius, for your sorrow is indeed not to be assuaged, and if we were in the Middle Ages, I should say to you, 'Enter a monastery.'"

"I have often thought of doing so," replied Octavius.

By this time they had reached the place appointed for the meeting. The sham Octavius' coupé was already waiting at the spot.

In the early morning light the woods had a picturesqueness they lose as the day advances and fashion invades them. It was that time in summer when the heat of the sun has not yet told upon the verdure of the foliage; the clumps of trees were bathed in fresh,

transparent tints, washed by the night dew, and exhaled the scent of new budding vegetation. At this point the trees are particularly handsome, either because the soil is peculiarly favourable to their growth, or because they are the remains of some old plantation. Their sturdy trunks, overlaid with moss or shining satiny bark, plunge their gnarled roots into the ground, stretch out their twisted branches, and would form admirable studies for painters and decorators who go so far afield in search of less beautiful subjects. The birds, that are mute during the day, were chirping gaily in the foliage, and a stray rabbit would bolt across the sanded walk and hide in the long grass, terrified by the sound of the wheels.

But all this poetry of nature in its unconventional aspect did not, as will readily be supposed, trouble the two principals and their seconds.

Count Olaf Labinski felt a shock at the sight of Dr. Cherbonneau, but he quickly recovered himself. The swords were measured; the duellists, after having taken off their coats, were placed in the positions assigned them, and fell on guard, their weapons directed against each other.

"Engage!" cried the seconds.

In every duel, no matter how bitter the parties may be against each other, there is first a moment of impressive immobility. Each man studies his opponent in silence, and forms his plan, settling on his attack and preparing to return it. Then the swords seek out, excite, feel each other, as it were, without the blades parting. This lasts for a few moments, that to the seconds seem like hours, so full of anxiety are they.

In this case, the conditions of the duel, though apparently, so far at least as the spectators were aware, of an ordinary nature, were so startling to the adversaries themselves that they remained on guard much longer than is customary. In point of fact, each man had his own body before him and had to drive his weapon into a frame that but a day or two before had been his own. The duel was therefore complicated by a sort of unforeseen suicide, and brave though they both were, Octavius and the Count experienced an instinctive feeling of horror at finding themselves sword in hand opposite their own doubles and ready to rush murderously upon themselves.

The seconds, growing impatient, were just about to

cry, "Do begin!" when the blades at last slid against each other.

Both showed equal skill in parrying the first few attacks. The Count, thanks to his military training, was a skilful swordsman, and had shown himself the equal of several of the most famous teachers; but, though he was still perfect in the theory, he lacked, in order to put it into practice, the muscular arm that had so often cut down Schamyl's Mourids. It was the weak wrist of Octavius that he had now to depend on. On the other hand, Octavius, in the body of the Count, enjoyed a vigour he was unaccustomed to, and though less skilful, always thrust aside from his breast the point that strove to pierce it.

In vain did Olaf do his utmost to reach his adversary; in vain did he risk the most hazardous lunges. Octavius, cooler and firmer, parried every feint. The Count began to lose his temper, and his sword play was becoming reckless and unsteady. Even if he had to remain Octavius de Saville, he meant to destroy that lying body that might deceive Prascovia, a thought that roused his wrath to the highest pitch. So, heedless of the danger to himself, he lunged straight in order to reach, through his own body, his rival's soul and life,

but Octavius bound his sword with so quick, firm, irresistible a turn, that the weapon, torn from his grasp, flashed through the air and fell to the ground some distance away.

Octavius held Olaf's life in his hands; all he had to do was to lunge and run him through. The Count's face was drawn, not that he feared death, but at the thought that he was about to leave his wife to the thief of his body, and that henceforth the impostor could not be unmasked.

Far from profiting by the advantage he had gained, Octavius threw down his sword, and, signing to the seconds not to interfere, approached the Count, whom, to the latter's stupefaction, he took by the arm and dragged away into a thicket.

"What is the meaning of this?" asked the Count. "Why do you not kill me, as you have the right to do? or why do you not allow me to go on fighting you after restoring my sword to me, if you do not wish to slay an unarmed man? You know only too well that the sun must not again project our two shadows upon the sand, and that the earth must receive one or the other of us."

"Listen to me patiently," answered Octavius. "Your

life's happiness is in my hands. I may, if I choose, keep for ever the body in which I am at this moment dwelling and which is your legitimate property. I am quite willing to acknowledge the fact since there are no witnesses present, and the birds, who will not repeat it, can alone hear us. If we go on with the duel, I shall kill you. Count Olaf Labinski, whom I represent to the best of my ability, is a better swordsman than Octavius de Saville, whose figure you bear, and whom, to my great regret, I shall be forced to slay. Now that death, even though unreal, would plunge my dear mother into the deepest grief."

The Count, perceiving the truth of these remarks, remained silent, apparently acquiescing in them.

"Never," continued Octavius, "will you succeed, unless I myself consent, in regaining your own personality; you can see for yourself what has been the result of your two attempts. If you tried again, you would certainly be taken for a monomaniac; nobody will believe a word you may say, for when you claim to be Count Labinski, everybody laughs in your face, as you very well know. You will be shut up in a private insane asylum, and you will spend the rest of your days in maintaining, while being ducked with cold water, that

you are the husband of the beautiful Countess Prascovia Labinski. Kind-hearted people will say, as they listen, 'Poor Octavius!' and you will share the fate of Balzac's Colonel Chabert, who tried to make people believe he was not dead."

All this was so absolutely true that the Count, overcome, let fall his head upon his breast.

"As you are Octavius de Saville for the present, you have no doubt looked into his drawers and run through his papers. Consequently you must be aware that for the past three years he has been madly and hopelessly in love with Countess Prascovia Labinski; that he has in vain tried to overcome that love, which will die only when he dies, — that is, supposing it does not last even beyond the grave."

"I do know it," said the Count, biting his lips.

"Well, in order to reach her I made use of a horrible, frightful means, that the maddest passion of love alone could venture to adopt. Dr. Cherbonneau tried in my favour an experiment that would have staggered thaumaturgists in every land and every age. Having plunged us both into a trance, he caused, by his magnetic powers, the transference of our souls. But the miracle was worked in vain! I am going to restore

your body to you, for Prascovia does not love me. Under the appearance of the husband she recognised the lover's soul, and on the threshold of her room her glance turned as icy as it did in the garden of the Villa Salviati."

Octavius spoke with an accent of such genuine grief that the Count did not hesitate to believe him.

"I am a lover," added Octavius with a smile, "not a thief; and since the only guerdon I cared for on earth cannot be mine, I see no reason why I should keep your titles, your castles, your lands, your wealth, your horses, your arms. Come, take my arm; let us look as if we had made up our quarrel. Let us thank our seconds for their services, take Dr. Cherbonneau with us, and return to the magical laboratory whence we issued transfigured. The old Brahmin is able to undo what he has done."

"Gentlemen," said Octavius, keeping up a little longer his part as Count Olaf Labinski, "my opponent and myself have had a confidential explanation which renders it unnecessary to proceed farther with the duel. There is nothing so efficacious for the clearing up of misunderstandings as the crossing of swords."

Count Zamoieczki and the Marquis de Sepulveda re-entered their carriage, and Alfred Humbert and Gustave Raimbaud got into their coupé. Count Olaf Labinski, Octavius de Saville, and Dr. Cherbonneau drove off rapidly to the Rue du Regard.

XII

ON the way from the Bois de Boulogne to the Rue du Regard, Octavius said to Dr. Cherbonneau : —

" My dear doctor, I am going once more to test your powers. You must retransfer our souls to their former domiciles. You will not find it difficult to do so, and I hope that Count Olaf Labinski will forgive your having compelled him to exchange his palace for a hut and installing for a few hours his brilliant self in my poor frame. Besides, you are powerful enough to fear no man's vengeance."

The physician nodded in acquiescence, and said : —

" The operation will be much easier this time. The imperceptible filaments that bind the soul to the body have been so recently broken in each of you that they have not had time to grow together again ; and besides, your wills will not oppose to the magnetiser the instinctive resistance one meets with in the magnetised. I hope, Count, you will forgive an old fellow for not having resisted the pleasure of trying an experiment for

which it is very difficult to find subjects; the more so that my attempt has merely served to bring out in its full beauty virtue so perfect that it cannot be deceived and that it triumphs where any other would have succumbed. You may take this temporary transformation as a confused dream, and by and by you may not be sorry to have experienced the strange sensation known to very few individuals, of having inhabited two different bodies. Metempsychosis is no new doctrine, but, before their transference to other bodies, souls drink of the cup of forgetfulness, and it is not every one who can, like Pythagoras, remember having taken part in the Trojan war."

"The restoration of my own individuality," politely returned the Count, "is a blessing that makes up for the unpleasantness of having been deprived of it; if I may say so with all due deference to Mr. Octavius de Saville, whom I still am but whom I shall presently not be."

Octavius smiled faintly, with the lips of Count Labinski, on hearing these words that reached him through another man's ears, and the three, whose anomalous situation rendered conversation difficult, relapsed into silence.

Poor Octavius thought of his vanished hopes, and these thoughts, it must be owned, were not particularly bright. Like all rejected lovers, he still kept asking himself why it was he had failed to make himself beloved, as if love were amenable to reason; as if its only reason were not *because*, — that reply, so logical in spite of its obstinate laconism, which women make to bothersome questions. Nevertheless he acknowledged himself beaten, and the spring of his life, wound up for a moment by Dr. Cherbonneau, had again broken and sounded in his heart like that of a watch that has been dropped to the ground. He wished to save his mother pain, and he was wondering where he could go to die of his strange grief under some scientific appellation. Had he been a painter, a poet or a musician, he would have crystallised his sorrow in masterpieces, and Prascovia, robed in white, and crowned with stars, would have soared over his inspiration like an angel of light; but, as I stated at the beginning of this tale, Octavius, though well educated and well bred, was not one of those great minds that leave their mark upon the world. With his sublime, obscure soul, he could only love and die.

The carriage rattled into the court-yard of the old

mansion in the Rue du Regard, the pavement of which was overgrown with grass, through which the footsteps of callers had worn a way and which the tall gray walls of the buildings flooded with shadows as cold as those that fall from the arcades of a cloister. Silence and Immobility kept watch and ward upon the threshold like a pair of invisible statues guarding the learned man's meditations.

Octavius and the Count alighted, and the doctor got out with more alertness than one would have expected from a man of his years, and without making use of the arm which the footman offered him with the politeness affected by the servants in great houses towards persons of advanced age or evidently feeble.

As soon as the double doors had closed upon them, Olaf and Octavius felt themselves caught in the heated atmosphere which reminded the physician of that of India, and in which he alone could breathe in comfort, for it almost suffocated people who had not been, like him, roasted for thirty years by the sun of the Tropics. The incarnations of Vishnu still grimaced in their frames, and looked queerer than ever by daylight. Siwa the blue god, grinned on his pedestal, and Durga, biting his indurated lips with his boar's

tusks, seemed to rattle his chaplet of skulls. The place retained its mysterious, magical appearance.

Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau led his two guests to the room where the first metamorphosis had been effected. He revolved the disk of the electrical machine, moved the iron bars in the Mesmer pail, opened the registers so as to cause the temperature to rise rapidly, read two or three lines from papyri so old that they looked like old bark ready to fall to dust, and, after a few minutes, he said to Octavius and the Count: —

"Gentlemen, I am at your service. Shall we begin?"

While the physician had been preparing himself troublesome thoughts filled the Count's mind.

"Once I am asleep," said he to himself, "what will that monkey-faced old man, who might well be the devil in person, do with my soul? Will he really restore it to my body, or will he carry it off to hell with him? Is this transfer, that is to give me back my own property, but another trap, a Machiavelian contrivance, the object of which I cannot perceive? Even so, my position cannot possibly be worse. Octavius is in possession of my body, and as he very truly said this morning, if I were to claim it under my pres-

ent guise, I should be confined as a lunatic. If he had wished to rid himself of me finally, he had only to thrust his sword through me. I was disarmed and at his mercy. Human justice had nothing to say in the matter; the duel was perfectly regular and everything was done in accordance with custom. Come! let me fix my thoughts on Prascovia, and do not let me yield to childish terrors. Let me put to the test the only means I have of ever regaining her."

And simultaneously with Octavius, he took hold of the iron rod the physician held out to him.

Stunned by the magnetic fluid with which the metal conductors were charged to their utmost capacity, the two young men speedily sank into a trance so deep that any person not previously informed of the fact, would have supposed them dead. As on the previous occasion, the physician made his passes, spoke the formula, and soon two little, trembling, luminous sparks appeared above Octavius and the Count. The physician first restored to its pristine dwelling-place Count Olaf Labinski's soul, and it flew thither eagerly in response to the magnetiser's gesture.

Meanwhile Octavius' soul was slowly passing away from Olaf's body and, instead of returning to its own,

rose and rose higher and higher, as if joying in its freedom, and did not appear anxious to re-enter its prison. The doctor was moved with compassion for the fluttering spirit, and asked himself whether it was a kindness or not to draw it back into this vale of tears. While he hesitated, the soul kept on ascending. Remembering what he had to do, Dr. Cherbonneau repeated in the most imperious manner the irresistible monosyllable, and made a gesture tremendous in its authority and power. But the little trembling spark had already passed outside the range of attraction, and flashing through the uppermost pane of the window, it vanished.

The doctor refrained from making any further efforts, well knowing they would be useless, and awakened the Count, who, on seeing in the mirror that he had regained possession of his usual features, uttered a cry of joy, cast a glance at the still motionless body of Octavius, as though to make quite sure that he was at last delivered from that frame, and sprang out, waving an adieu to the physician. A few moments later the dull roll of a carriage passing out under the vaulted entrance was heard, and Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau was left alone face to face with the dead body of Octavius de Saville.

"By the trunk of Ganesa!" exclaimed the pupil of the Elephanta Brahmin, when the Count had gone out; "this is a nice mess! I opened the cage door, the bird has flown away, and it is already so far from this mundane sphere that even Brahma-Loghum, the sannyasi, could not recall it, and I am left with a dead body on my hands. Of course, I could easily dissolve it in a corrosive bath of such strength that not a trace of it could be found, or turn it in the course of a few hours into a Pharaonic mummy like those enclosed in the cases covered over with hieroglyphs, but an inquiry would certainly be set on foot; my place would be searched, my boxes opened, and I should be asked all manner of unpleasant questions."

At this moment a brilliant idea occurred to the physician. He seized a pen and rapidly wrote a few lines on a sheet of paper which he then placed in the drawer of his desk. The paper contained the following words: —

"Having neither parents nor relatives, I bequeath all my property to Mr. Octavius de Saville, for whom I entertain particular affection, on the condition that he shall pay to the Brahmin Hospital in Ceylon, a sum of one hundred thousand francs, for the benefit of old,

worn-out, or sick animals; that he shall pay to my Hindoo servant and to my English servant an annuity of twelve hundred francs apiece, and that he shall hand over to the Mazarin Library my manuscript copy of the laws of Manou."

This bequest made by the living to the dead is assuredly one of the strangest incidents in this most unlikely, yet perfectly true tale; but the reason for it will presently become apparent.

The physician touched the body of Octavius de Saville, which still retained the warmth of life; looked in the mirror at his own tanned, wrinkled face, rough as shagreen, with a singularly disdainful air, and making a gesture like a man who throws off an old coat to put on a new one brought him by the tailor, he spoke the formula taught him by Brahma-Loghum, the sannyasi.

As if struck by a thunderbolt, the body of Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau fell to the ground, while that of Octavius de Saville sprang up full of life, strong and alert.

Octavius-Cherbonneau remained for a few moments standing by the lean, bony, livid form that, no longer sustained by the powerful soul which had vivified it a

second before, exhibited almost at once signs of extreme old age, and rapidly assumed a cadaverous appearance.

"Fare thee well, poor human rag, wretched vestment out at elbows, worn on every seam, which for seventy years I have dragged about the four corners of the world! Thou hast served me faithfully, and it is not without a pang that I leave thee, for one gets used to the companionship of life. But in this youthful frame, which my knowledge will enable me to speedily endow with vigorous health, I shall be able to study, to work, to read yet a few more words of the great Book, without death closing it at the most interesting part and saying: 'Enough!'"

Having thus spoken his own funeral discourse, Octavius-Cherbonneau went forth peacefully to take possession of his new existence.

Count Olaf Labinski had hurried back to his mansion and asked if the Countess could see him. He found her in the conservatory, seated on a mossy bank, amid a veritable virgin forest of exotic and tropical plants, while through the half-opened sashes blew in a bright, soft air. She was reading Novalis, one of the most subtle, most rarefied, most immaterial writers

which German spiritualism has produced. The Countess did not like books that depicted life in strong and realistic colours, and life itself struck her, thanks to her living so much in a world of refinement, poetry, and love, as somewhat coarse.

She threw down her book and slowly raised her eyes to those of the Count. She dreaded seeing again in her husband's dark orbs the burning, stormy glance, laden with mysterious thoughts, that had so deeply troubled her and which seemed to her — absurd as the thought was — the glance of another man.

But in Olaf's eyes shone joy serene, burned the steady flame of chaste, pure love; the foreign soul that had changed the expression of his features, had flown for ever. Prascovia at once recognised her beloved husband's real self, and her cheeks flushed with happiness. Although she was ignorant of the transformations worked by Dr. Cherbonneau, her sensitive nature had unconsciously perceived every change.

"What are you reading, my dear Prascovia?" said Olaf, as he picked up from the mossy bank the book, bound in blue morocco. "Ah! the story of Heinrich

von Ofterdingen. Why, this is the very book I once rode full speed to Mohilev to get for you, because you had said you would like to have it. By midnight it was on your table, by the side of your lamp. Ralph, it is true, paid for it with his wind."

"And I remember saying that never again should I express any wish in your presence. You are like that grandee of Spain who begged his mistress not to look at the stars, for he could not get them for her."

"If *you* were to look at one," replied the Count, "I should try to scale the heavens and to go and ask God for it."

While listening to her husband, the Countess was smoothing a rebellious lock of hair in her bandeau, that flashed like a flame in a sunbeam. As she did so, her sleeve slipped down, baring her beautiful arm, encircled by the turquoise-studded bracelet she wore on the day she made her appearance at the Cascine, a day that had proved fatal to Octavius.

"How that poor little lizard, which I killed with a blow of my light cane, frightened you that day when, at my request, you came down to the garden for the first time. I had it copied in gold and adorned with a

few stones, but even in the form of a jewel it still terrified you, and it was some time before you could make up your mind to wear it."

"Oh! I am quite used to it now, and it is my favourite ornament, for it recalls a very sweet remembrance."

"Yes," went on the Count; "it was on that day that we agreed that the next morning I should ask your aunt for your hand."

The Countess, finding again the glance and the accent of the real Olaf, and, besides, reassured by these secret remembrances, smiled upon him, took his arm and walked about the conservatory with him, gathering, as she went, with the hand that was free, a flower here and there and biting the petals with her blooming lips, like that Venus whom Schiavone has represented feeding upon roses.

"Since your memory is so good to-day," said she, casting away the flower she was biting with her pearly teeth, "I suppose you have regained the command of your mother tongue — which you had forgotten yesterday?"

"Oh!" replied the Count in Polish, "that is the tongue in which my soul shall speak to you in Heaven

to tell you I love you, if souls in Heaven speak with human tongues."

Prascovia, as she walked, let her head rest softly on Olaf's shoulder.

"Dear heart," she whispered, "now you are such as I love you. Yesterday, you frightened me, and I fled from you as from a stranger."

The next day, Octavius de Saville, in whose body dwelt the soul of the old physician, received a black-bordered letter, inviting him to attend the funeral of Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau. The doctor, in his new frame, followed his former body to the cemetery, saw himself interred, listened with a well assumed air of reverence to the address delivered at the grave, and in which the irreparable loss sustained by science was deplored, and then he returned to the Rue Saint-Lazare, to await the reading of the will he had made in his own favour.

On the same day the following paragraph appeared in the evening papers: —

"Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau, well known by his long residence in India, his philological attainments, and the marvellous cures he effected, was found dead, yesterday, in his study. A minute examination of the body

failed to reveal any traces of crime. Death was probably caused by excessive intellectual fatigue or may have been the result of some dangerous experiment. It is said that an olograph will, found among the doctor's papers, bequeaths to the Mazarin Library a number of exceedingly valuable manuscripts, and that a young gentleman of distinguished family, Mr. O. de S., is appointed residuary legatee."

Fettatura

JETTATURA

I

THE "Leopold," a splendid Tuscan steamer plying between Marseilles and Naples, had just doubled Procida Point. The passengers, cured of their sea-sickness by the sight of land, most efficacious of all remedies, were all out on deck. On the part reserved for the first-class passengers, stood a number of Englishmen endeavouring to get away as far as possible from each other and to trace around themselves a circle none might venture to enter. Their splenetic faces were carefully shaven, their cravats had not a wrinkle, their shirt collars, white and stiff, looked like triangles of Bristol board, their hands were protected by brand-new Suède gloves, and their new boots shone with Lord Elliot's blacking. They looked as if they had just emerged from one of the compartments of their dressing-cases, for in their correct get-up there were visible none of the little disorders of dress which are the usual consequences of travel.

There were noblemen, members of Parliament, City merchants, tailors from Regent Street, and cutlers from Sheffield, all proper, grave, motionless, and bored. Nor were ladies wanting, for Englishwomen are not sedentary like the women of other lands, and the smallest pretext suffices to justify their leaving their island. By the side of the great ladies and of the wives of commoners, somewhat ripe beauties, with blotchy faces, bloomed, their faces half concealed by their blue veils, maidens with complexions of milk and roses, with shimmering golden tresses, and long white teeth, recalling the favourite types of "Keepsakes," and proving that English engravings are not so untrue to life as is often said. These lovely creatures repeated, each in turn, with the most delightful British accent, the obligatory "*Vedi Napoli e poi mori;*" perused their Murray or wrote down their impressions of travel upon their note-books, without paying the least attention to the glances of a number of would-be Don Juans from Paris who roamed about in their vicinity, while the angry mammas grumbled about French impropriety.

On the edge of the aristocratic quarter-deck, strolled, while smoking their cigars, three or four young fellows whose straw or felt hats, sack-coats with huge horn

buttons, and duck trousers, made it easy to recognise as artists, a fact confirmed by their mustaches *à la* Van Dyck, their hair curled *à la* Rubens, or cropped short *à la* Paolo Veronese. Inspired by very different motives they also were trying, like the dandies, to catch a glimpse of the beauties whom their lack of wealth forbade their approaching more closely, and these efforts somewhat interfered with their enjoyment of the magnificent panorama outspread before them.

In the bows of the vessel, leaning against the bulwarks or seated on coils of rope, were grouped the third-class passengers, engaged in consuming the provisions uneaten on account of the sea-sickness, and casting not one glance upon the finest view in the world, for the feeling of nature is the privilege of cultivated minds which are not absorbed wholly by the material needs of life.

The weather was fine; the blue waves rolled broadly on with scarce power enough to efface the ship's wake. The smoke from the funnel, forming clouds in the glorious heavens, blew away softly in cottony flakes, and the paddle-wheels, revolving in an iridescent diamond spray, churned the water with joyous activity as if aware of the proximity of the harbour.

Already the purple lines of hills that, from Posilipo to Vesuvius, encircle the wondrous gulf at the upper end of which Naples lies like a sea-nymph resting and drying herself after her bath, were becoming more distinct and stood out more plainly against the brilliant azure of the heavens. Already a few white spots, showing on the darker background of the land, indicated the presence of towns scattered along the countryside. The sails of the homeward-bound fishing-boats slipped along the smooth blue waters like swans' feathers blown by the breeze, and spoke of human activity upon the majestic solitude of the sea.

Very soon the Castle of Saint-Elmo and the Convent di San Martino came out distinctly on the crest of the mountain on which stands Naples, showing above the domes of the churches, the terraces of the hotels, the fronts of the palaces, and the verdure of the gardens, that were yet but faintly visible through a luminous haze. Then the Castello dell' Ovo, squatting on its foam-flecked reef, seemed to approach the steamer, and the pier with its lighthouse drew near like an arm holding a torch.

At the end of the bay, Vesuvius, now nearer, changed its blue tints, due to distance, for more vigorous and

solid tones; its sides were seen to be furrowed with gullies and streams of lava grown cold, and from its truncated cone, as from the holes of a perfume-burner, plainly issued little jets of white smoke that wavered in the wind.

Chiatamone, Pizzo Falcone, the hotel-bordered quay of Santa Lucia, the Palazzo Nuovo, flanked with its balconied towers, the Arsenal, and ships of all nations, mingling their masts and spars like the trees of a leafless wood, were plainly to be seen, when there emerged from a cabin a passenger who had not shown up once during the whole trip, either because sea-sickness had kept him in confinement, or because his reserve prevented his mingling with his fellow-travellers, or again because the prospect, new to most of them, had long been a familiar sight to him and had ceased to excite his interest.

He was a young fellow of twenty-six to twenty-eight years. At least such was the age one felt tempted to give him at the first glance, though when he was examined attentively he seemed to be either younger or older than that, so curiously mingled were weariness and youthfulness upon his enigmatical countenance. His hair, of that dark fairness called auburn

by the English, shone in the sunlight with coppery, metallic sheen, and in the shade seemed almost black. His profile was clear cut, his brow would have called forth the admiration of a phrenologist, thanks to its protuberances, his nose was nobly aquiline, his lips well formed, and his chin had that powerful roundness that recalls the medals of antiquity. Yet, these various features, individually handsome, did not form an agreeable whole. They lacked the mysterious harmony that softens contours and makes them melt one into another. There is a legend of an Italian painter who, seeking to represent the rebellious archangel, composed a face of dissimilar beauties and thus attained an effect of terror far beyond what is possible by the use of horns, arched eyebrows, and unholy grin. The stranger's face produced a similar impression. His eyes, in particular, were extraordinary. The black lashes that edged them contrasted with the pale gray colour of the pupils and the auburn shade of the hair; the thinness of the nose caused them to look nearer each other than allowed by the rules of drawing, and as for their expression it was quite undefinable. When the young man's gaze did not consciously rest upon anything, it was moist with vague melancholy and soft

tenderness, but if he looked at any one or anything, his brows bent, and formed a perpendicular wrinkle on his forehead; the pupils lost their gray colour and turned green, spotted with black spots and striated with yellow lines; his glance then flashed sharply, almost painfully, after which he would resume his former placidity, and from a Mephistophelian individual turn into a young man of the world — a member of the Jockey Club, if you like — on his way to spend the season in Naples, and glad to step on a lava floor less mobile than the "Leopold's" deck.

His dress was elegant and did not draw the eye by any striking details. He wore a dark blue frock coat, a black cravat with polka dots, which was tied in a way that avoided both carelessness and over carefulness; a waistcoat of the same pattern as the tie, a pair of light gray trousers, and neat boots. His gold watch chain was of the plainest pattern, and the cord of his eye-glasses was of silk, tressed flat. In his well-gloved hand he carried a slender cane, made of a twisted vine-stem, mounted in silver.

He took a few steps along the deck, his glance wandering idly over the shore, now drawing closer, and on which one could see the carriages driving along,

the people crowding and the collecting of those groups of idlers to whom the arrival of a stage-coach or a steamer is an ever interesting and ever novel sight, even though they have gazed upon it a thousand times.

Already a flotilla of boats and other craft was starting for the quay, with the intention of boarding the "Leopold." They bore waiters, guides, facchini and other assorted samples of the rabble which is accustomed to look on strangers as its natural prey. The various craft were rowing hard in order to be the first to reach the ship, and, as usual, the crews were exchanging insults in a loud tone of voice fit to terrify people unused to the manners and customs of the lower classes in Naples.

The auburn haired young man had, in order to grasp more readily the details of the prospect unrolled before him, put on his eye-glasses, but his attention, distracted from the sublime prospect of the bay by the concert of yells that rose from the flotilla, was drawn to the boats. No doubt he was annoyed at the noise, for his brows bent, the wrinkle on his brow became marked, and his gray eyes turned yellowish.

An unexpected billow, running in from sea, with a fringe of foam on its crest, passed under the steamer

which it raised and let fall again heavily, broke on the quay in blinding spray, wetted the promenaders surprised by the suddenness of the douche, and with its backwash dashed the boats together so roughly that a number of facchini fell overboard. The accident had no serious consequences, for the rascals swam like fishes or marine deities, and reappeared a few seconds later, with the salt water running out of their mouths and their ears, their hair plastered against their temples, and assuredly as much astonished at the unexpected dive as was Telemachus, the son of Ulysses, when Minerva, under the guise of the sage Mentor, threw him into the sea from the top of a rock in order to withdraw him from the love of Eucharis.

At a respectful distance behind the strange traveller, there stood by a pile of trunks a small groom, a sort of old man of fifteen, a liveried gnome, who looked like one of the dwarfs whom the Chinese patiently bring up in porcelain jars to prevent their growing. His flat face, on which the nose scarcely showed, seemed to have been compressed in earliest childhood, and his protruding eyes had the sweetness of look which certain naturalists attribute to the toad's eye. Neither his chest nor his back was deformed, and

though one would in vain have looked for a hump on him, he gave the impression of being a hunchback. In a word, he was a very proper groom, who might have ridden at Ascot or Chantilly without first going into training; his queer looks would have determined any gentleman-rider to engage him on the spot. He was repulsive, but irreproachable in his own way, like his master.

The passengers landed, and, with their luggage, fell a prey to the porters after the latter had exchanged insults that were more than Homeric, and proceeded to the various hotels with which Naples is abundantly provided.

The traveller with the eye-glasses and his groom went to the Hôtel de Rome, followed by a numerous company of robust facchini who pretended to groan and sweat under the burden of a hat-box or a small parcel, guilelessly expecting a heavy tip, while four or five of their comrades, who exhibited muscles as powerful as those of the "Hercules" so much admired in the Studj, pushed a handcart on which had been placed two trunks of moderate size and equally moderate weight.

When the hotel was reached and the *padron di casa*

had shown the newcomer to his apartment, the porters, although they had received about three times their legal fare, indulged in the most frantic gesticulations and in speeches in which supplications and threats were mingled in the most comical fashion, all shouting at one and the same time with terrific volubility, claiming additional pay and swearing by all that was holy that they had not been sufficiently rewarded for their exertions. Paddy, who had to face them alone — for his master, unheeding the noise, had already gone upstairs — looked like a monkey surrounded by a pack of hounds. In order to still the tumult, he attempted a harangue in his mother tongue, that is, in English, but his speech proved unacceptable. Then, closing his fists and placing his arms breast high, he assumed, to the great hilarity of the facchini, a very correct boxing attitude, and with a blow straight from the shoulder, worthy of Adams or Tom Cribb, he landed on the breadbasket of the biggest fellow in the crowd, and sent him flying heels over head on the lava pavement.

This exploit put the rabble to flight; the hulking fellow picked himself up with difficulty, feeling very sore, and, without seeking to have his revenge on Paddy, went off with endless contortions, rubbing with

his hand the blue-black mark that was already showing on his skin, and convinced that a devil must be hidden under the jacket of the monkey-like groom, who looked as if he were fit to ride nothing bigger than a dog and as if a breath of wind would blow him away.

The stranger, having summoned the *padron di casa*, asked him if any letters had come for Mr. Paul d'Aspremont. The hotel-keeper replied that a letter so addressed had been lying for a week in the letter-rack, and he hastened to fetch the epistle. The letter, enclosed in a thick envelope of blue cream laid paper, and sealed with aventurine sealing-wax, was addressed in a sloping, angular hand with cursive strokes, denoting a high aristocratic education, and common, too uniformly perhaps, to English young ladies of good family.

The contents of the note, which Mr. d'Aspremont opened with an eagerness due apparently to something more than mere curiosity, were as follows: —

"DEAR MR. PAUL, —We reached Naples two months ago, travelling by short stages. Uncle complained bitterly of the heat, the mosquitoes, the wine, the butter, the beds. He swore he must have been crazy to leave

his comfortable home near London, to travel on dusty roads lined with wretched inns, in which no decent English dog would consent to pass the night; but, for all his grumbling, he accompanied me and I could have taken him to the world's end. He is none the worse for his trip, and I am a great deal better. We have settled down on the sea-shore, in a whitewashed house hidden in a sort of virgin forest of orange, lime, myrtle, and rose laurel trees, and other exotic plants. From our terrace we have a wonderful view, and every afternoon you will find there a cup of tea or a glass of lemonade, whichever you may prefer. Uncle, whom you have fascinated, I know not how, will be delighted to see you again; and need I add that I shall not be sorry to do so either, although you did cut my fingers with your ring when you bade us good-bye on the pier at Folkstone?

"ALICIA W."

II

PAUL D'ASPREMONT, after he had dined in his room, called for a carriage. There are always plenty of them round the large hotels on the look-out for travellers, so that his wish was at once gratified. By the side of Neapolitan cab horses, Rosinante itself would seem in excellent condition; their skinny heads, their ribs showing like the hoops of a barrel, their protruding backbones, always raw, seem to implore as a kindness the knacker's knife, for the careless Southerner deems it a piece of needless attention to feed animals. The harness, usually broken, is mended with bits of cord, and when the coachman has gathered up his reins and calls on his horses to start, one feels sure that the horses will vanish into thin air and the vehicle disappear in smoke, after the manner of Cinderella's carriage when she returned from the ball after midnight, contrary to the fairy's orders. But it is not so; the poor brutes stiffen their limbs, and after a few struggles, start on a gallop which they keep up steadily. The coachman inspires them with his

own ardour, and the lash of his whip brings out the last spark of life concealed within their skeleton frames. They prance, throw their heads up and down, try to look spirited, open their eyes and their nostrils, and go at a pace that the fastest English trotters could not equal. To what this phenomenon is due, and what is the mysterious power that enables dead animals to gallop at full speed, I cannot explain, but the fact is patent that this miracle is of daily occurrence in Naples and that no one is in the least surprised at it.

Mr. Paul d'Aspremont's carriage was flying through the dense crowd, shaving the citron-wreathed acquajoli shops, the open-air stalls of vendors of stews and macaroni, the fishmongers' stalls, and the heaps of water-melons ranged on the highway like piles of cannonballs in an artillery park. Scarcely did the lazzaroni, lying along the walls wrapped up in their mantles, deign to draw their legs out of the way of the equipages. From time to time a corricolo, with its great scarlet wheels, dashed past bearing a crowd of monks, nurses, facchini, and ragamuffins, and scraping the wheels of d'Aspremont's carriage in the midst of a cloud of dust and noise. Corricoli are now proscribed, and it is forbidden to build any new ones, but it is permitted to put

a new body on an old pair of wheels, or to fit new wheels to an old body, an ingenious method which will enable these quaint vehicles to last a long time yet, to the great delight of amateurs of local colour.

Our traveller, however, paid but scant attention to the animated and picturesque sights that would certainly have attracted any tourist who had not found awaiting him at the Hôtel de Rome a note addressed to him and signed "Alicia W." He looked with inattentive gaze at the blue, limpid sea, on which could be made out, in a brilliant light, and coloured by distance with amethyst and sapphire tints, the lovely isles scattered in fan shape at the entrance of the bay: Capri, Ischia, Nisida, Procida, the harmonious names of which resound like Greek dactyls. But his soul was not there; it was flying away in the direction of Sorrento, towards the little white house nestling in the greenery, and spoken of by Alicia in her note.

At this moment d'Aspremont's face had not the indefinably unpleasant expression it bore when some inward joy did not harmonise its dissonant perfections. It was positively handsome and sympathetic, as the Italians are fond of saying. The corners of his mouth were not drawn down disdainfully, and his quiet eyes

were filled with tender light. It was easy to understand, on seeing him thus, the feelings for him apparently indicated by the half tender, half mocking words on the cream laid paper. His individuality, backed up by his high breeding, must have proved attractive to a young girl brought up with much freedom in the English fashion by an old and very indulgent uncle.

Thanks to the pace at which the coachman drove his horses, Chiaja and La Marinella were soon left behind, and the carriage drove through the open country on a road now replaced by a railway line. Black dust, like triturated coal, imparts a Plutonian aspect to the whole of this shore, over which shines a dazzling sky and which is laved by a sea of the loveliest azure. It is the soot of Vesuvius, sifted by the wind, that dusts the beach and makes the houses of Portici and Torre del Greco look like Birmingham factories. But d'Aspremont did not concern himself with the contrast between the ebon earth and the sapphire heavens; he was in too great a hurry to reach his destination. The finest roads are long when a Miss Alicia is waiting for one at the end of them, and when it is six months since one parted from her on the pier at Folkestone.

The sky and the sea of Naples fail to work their spell under these circumstances.

The carriage left the highway, turned down a cross-road, and drew up in front of a gate formed of two whitewashed brick pillars, surmounted with vases in terra cotta, in which bloomed aloes with leaves like tin and sharp as daggers. It was closed by an open-work green-painted swinging gate, and the wall was replaced by a hedge of cacti, the angular stems of which had inextricably interlaced their thorny fronds. Above the hedge, three or four huge fig-trees spread out their broad metallic leaves in compact masses, growing vigorously like African vegetation. A great umbrella pine waved its crown of leaves, and one could scarcely make out, through the luxuriant growth, the white façade of the house gleaming in spots behind the thick curtain of foliage.

A dark-complexioned servant, with curling hair so thick that it would have broken a comb, hastened up at the sound of the wheels, opened the gate, and, walking in front of Mr. d'Aspremont down a rose laurel walk, the blooms of which caressed his cheeks, led him to the terrace where Miss Alicia was having tea with her uncle.

Yielding to a very justifiable caprice in a young lady, tired of comfort and elegance, and mayhap also to tease her uncle, whose commonplace tastes she made fun of, Miss Alicia had chosen, in preference to a more civilised dwelling, this villa, the owners of which were travelling, and which had remained uninhabited for a number of years. She found in this abandoned garden, that had almost returned to a state of nature, a wild poetry that pleased her; in the quickening Neapolitan climate everything had grown with prodigious activity. Orange trees and myrtles, pomegranates and lime trees had thoroughly enjoyed themselves, and not having the fear of the gardener's pruning-knife before their eyes, had clasped hands across the walk from one end to the other, or penetrated familiarly into the rooms wherever there was a broken pane. The place did not have the sad look of a deserted Northern abode, but was marked by the mad joy and happy carelessness of Southern nature left to itself. In the owner's absence, the exuberant vegetation had indulged in a debauch of leaves, flowers, fruits, and scents, and re-conquered the ground man had deprived it of.

When the Commodore, for so Alicia familiarly called her uncle, saw the impenetrable thicket, through which

a machete was needed to cut a way, he broke out into the liveliest remonstrances and swore his niece was crazy. But Alicia gravely promised to have cut from the entrance-door to the drawing-room and from the drawing-room to the terrace a passage wide enough for the bringing in of a butt of Malmsey wine, this being the only concession she would grant to her uncle's positivism. The Commodore had to give in, for he could never resist his niece, and at this very time he was on the terrace, seated opposite to her, sipping a big glass of rum, which he called tea.

The terrace, which had mainly attracted the young lady, was, in point of fact, very picturesque and merits a detailed description, for Paul d'Aspremont will often return to it, and one ought to paint the setting of the scenes one describes.

The terrace, the precipitous walls of which overhung a hollow road, was reached by steps formed of broad disjointed stones, between the interstices of which grew luxuriantly vigorous wild plants. Four broken pillars, brought from some antique ruin, their lost capitals replaced by square stones, supported a trellis of poles intertwined and covered with vines. From the parapet fell in sheets and wreaths wall plants and

wild vines. At the foot of the walls Indian figs, aloes, and arbutus grew in delightful disorder, while beyond a wood topped by a palm tree and three Italian pines, the view extended over rolling ground on which were scattered white villas, embraced the violet outlines of Vesuvius, or was prolonged over the blue distance of the sea.

When Paul d'Aspremont appeared at the top of the steps, Alicia rose with an exclamation of pleasure, and came forward to meet him. Paul shook hands with her in English fashion, but the young lady raised her prisoned hand to the lips of her friend with a motion full of youthful grace and ingenuous coquetry.

The Commodore tried to raise himself on his gouty legs, and managed to do so after a few grimaces due to pain, which contrasted comically with the look of delight that illumined his broad face. He approached, alertly enough for him, the two young people, and grasped Paul's hand in a way to crush his fingers against each other, which is the highest outward mark of good British cordiality.

Miss Alicia Ward belonged to that class of English brunettes who realise an ideal the very conditions of which seem to be irreconcilable; that is, a skin so

dazzlingly fair as to make milk, snow, lilies, alabaster, virgin wax, and whatever poets use by way of comparisons of whiteness, look almost yellow by the side of it, cherry lips, and hair as black as the darkness of night on a raven's wing. The effect of this contrast is irresistible, and results in a singular loveliness which has no equivalent. It may be that some Circassians, brought up in the Seraglio from childhood possess the same wonderful complexion, but on this point I have no information to go by save the exaggerations of Oriental poetry and the water-colour paintings by Lewis that represent the harems of Cairo. Alicia was assuredly the most perfect type of this style of beauty.

The long oval of her face, her incomparably pure complexion, her well-shaped, delicate, transparent nose, her dark blue eyes fringed with long lashes that fluttered on her rosy cheeks like black butterflies when she lowered her eyelids, her lips coloured with dazzling crimson, her hair falling in long, shimmering ringlets like satin ribbons on either side of her face and of her swan-like neck, testified in favour of the romantic female faces by Maclise which, at the Universal Exhibition, looked like delightful impostures.

She wore a flounced grenadine dress, the flounces themselves festooned and embroidered with red sprigs that harmonised wonderfully well with the small grained strings of coral that formed her head-dress, her necklace, and her bracelets. Five pendants, hung from a facetted coral pearl, quivered in each of her small, delicately convoluted ears. If the reader feels like blaming this wealth of coral, let him remember that he is in Naples, where the fishermen come up out of the sea on purpose to present you with these branches that the air turns red.

I owe that reader of mine, were it but by way of contrast to the portrait of Alicia which I have just drawn, at the very least a Hogarthian caricature of her uncle.

The Commodore, who was some sixty years old, was noticeable for his uniformly crimson face, on which stood out his white eyebrows and mutton-chop whiskers, so that he looked like an old redskin tattooed with chalk. Sunstrokes, unavoidable on a trip to Italy, had added a few more layers to that ardent colouring. He was dressed from head to foot, jacket, waistcoat, trousers and gaiters, in a reddish-gray vicuna, which no doubt his tailor had assured him was the most fashionable shade and that most worn, wherein perchance

he lied not. Yet, in spite of his brilliant complexion and his eccentric dress, the Commodore looked by no means vulgar. His thorough cleanliness, his irreproachable neatness and his fine manner pointed him out as a perfect gentleman, even though he had more than one external resemblance to the Englishmen in farces which Hoffmann and Levassor are fond of parodying. As for his character, he adored his niece and drank much port wine and Jamaica rum to keep up the humid root, after the manner of Corporal Trim.

"See how well I am now, and how lovely! Look at my colour; I am not yet up to uncle, and I hope I shall never be. But I have roses here, real roses," said Alicia, as she drew across her cheek a slender finger tipped with a nail polished as agate. "I have grown stouter, too, and those horrid salt-cellars that caused me so much trouble when I went to balls have vanished. Now, must not a woman be a coquette to part with her lover for three months, so that at the end of the time he may find her blooming and splendid!"

As she spoke this tirade in the playful and sparkling tone familiar to her, Alicia stood before Paul as if to challenge him to examine her.

"She is as robust and full of health now," added the Commodore, "as those Procida girls who carry amphoræ on their heads, is she not?"

"Unquestionably, Commodore," answered Paul; "it was impossible for Alicia to be more lovely, but she is plainly in better health than when, through coquetry, as she claims, she compelled me to endure a painful separation."

As he said this, his glance rested with strange fixity upon the young girl who stood before him. Suddenly the lovely rosy flush she had boasted of having acquired faded from Alicia's cheeks as the flush of evening fades from the snowy mountain slopes when the sun sinks in the west. Trembling all over, she put her hand to her heart, and her lovely lips paled and were contracted with pain.

Paul, much alarmed, rose, as did the Commodore. Alicia's bright colour had returned, though her smile still cost her an effort.

"I promised you a cup of tea or a sherbet, and, although I am English, I advise you to have the sherbet. Snow is better than hot water in this country, so near to Africa that the sirocco comes straight from it."

The three sat down round the stone table, under the

vine-leaf bower. The sun had sunk into the sea, and the azure day, called night in Naples, followed the golden day. The moon scattered silvery spots upon the terrace through the interstices of the foliage; the sea rippled with kissing sound upon the beach, and from a distance came the sound of the tambourines that accompanied the tarantella.

By and by Paul had to take his leave. Vicè, the dark-complexioned, wavy-haired maid, came with a lantern to show Paul his way through the mazes of the garden. While serving the sherbet and snow water, she had fized upon the new-comer a glance in which curiosity was mingled with fear. Doubtless the result of this examination had been unfavourable to Paul, for Vicè's brow, already as brown as a cigar, had darkened still more, and as she accompanied the stranger, she directed towards him, but so that he should not notice it, her first and fourth fingers, while the other two, folded back under the palm, met the thumb as if to form some cabalistic sign.

III

ALICIA'S friend returned to the Hôtel de Rome by the same road he had come. The night was incomparably beautiful; the bright, splendid moon cast upon the diaphanous blue waters a long trail of silvery spangles, the perpetual motion of which, due to the lipping of the wavelets, increased their brilliancy. In the offing, the fishing boats, each bearing in the bows an iron cradle filled with lighted tow, studded the sea with red stars and left ruddy wakes behind them. The smoke from Vesuvius, white by day, had changed into a pillar of fire and also cast its reflection upon the bay, that, at this moment, had that appearance which strikes Northern eyes as improbable, and which it has in those Italian water-colours, in black frames, so widespread a few years ago, and which were more accurate than one would have supposed, judging by their crude exaggeration.

A few noctambulistic lazzaroni still mooned about the beach, unconsciously moved by the wondrous prospect,

and looked out into the blue distance with their great black eyes. Others, seated on the rail of some boat hauled up on the shore, were singing the aria from "Lucia" or the then popular romance, "*Ti voglio ben' assai*," in a voice that many a highly paid tenor would have envied. Naples sits up late, like all Southern cities, yet the lights in the windows were going out one by one, and only the lottery offices, with their coloured paper decorations, their favourite numbers, and their bright lights, remained open, ready to receive the money of capricious gamblers who, as they wended homeward, might be seized with the fancy of wagering a few carlini or a few ducats upon some number they had dreamed of.

Paul turned in, drew the gauze mosquito-netting about his bed, and speedily fell asleep. As happens to travellers after a sea trip, his couch, though motionless, seemed to him to pitch, scend, and roll, just as if the Hôtel de Rome had been the "Leopold." This feeling caused him to dream that he was still at sea, and that on the pier he saw Alicia, looking very pale by the side of her red-faced uncle, signing to him not to land. The face of the young girl expressed deep grief, and she seemed, as she motioned him back, to

be obeying much against her will some imperious fatality.

The dream, to which recent images lent extraordinary reality, so troubled the sleeper that he awoke, and he was glad to find himself in his room, in which quivered the opaline reflections of a night-light that illumined a small porcelain tube round which the mosquitoes buzzed and swarmed. In order not again to have such a painful dream, Paul struggled against sleep and began to think of the beginning of his acquaintance with Alicia, going over, one after another, the innocently charming scenes of first love.

He saw again the red brick house in Richmond, covered with roses and honeysuckle, where dwelt Alicia and her uncle, and to which he had gone, on his first visit to England, with one of those letters of introduction the sole result of which is usually an invitation to dinner. He recalled the white Indian muslin dress, with a single ribbon for sole ornament, which Alicia, who had just left boarding-school, wore on that day, and the spray of jasmine which twined in the wealth of her hair like a floweret from Ophelia's wreath borne away by the stream, her velvet blue eyes and her half opened mouth which allowed a

glimpse of her pearly teeth, her slender neck that turned like that of a bird whose attention is awakened, and her sudden blush when the glance of the young French gentleman met hers.

The dark wainscotted sitting-room, hung with green cloth, and adorned with fox-hunting scenes and steeple-chasing incidents, coloured in the crude English way, came up in his mind as in a camera obscura. There was the piano with its row of keys like the set of teeth of some old dowager. Under the mantelpiece, round which grew a spray of ivy, shone the black-leaded grate; he could see the oaken arm-chairs, covered with morocco, the carpet with its rose pattern, and Alicia, trembling like a leaf, singing in the most adorably out-of-tune voice, the romance from "Anna Bolena," "*deh, non voler costringere*," while he, not less moved than she, accompanied her, entirely out of time, and the Commodore, dozing in slow digestion, and redder than ever, let slip to the ground a bulky "Times" and its "Supplement."

Then the scene changed. Paul, who had been admitted to the intimacy of the family, was invited by the Commodore to spend a few days in their Lincolnshire home. An old feudal castle, with crenelated

towers and Gothic windows, half-covered with ivy, but arranged internally with all modern comforts, rose at the end of a lawn, the turf of which, carefully watered and rolled, was smooth as velvet. Round the sward ran a sanded walk, which served Alicia for a riding-ground, and on which she cantered on one of the wild-maned Scottish ponies, which Sir Edward Landseer loves to paint, and to which he gives an almost human glance. Paul, mounted on a bright bay lent him by the Commodore, accompanied her on her circular ride; for the physician, who found her lungs rather weak, had ordered her to take exercise.

Or again a light boat glided over the pond, brushing aside the waterlilies and sending the kingfishers scurrying away to the refuge of the silvery willows. Alicia rowed and Paul held the yoke-lines. How lovely she looked in the golden halo formed round her head by the sunbeams that shone through her straw hat! She pulled her oars well back, pressing the tip of her gray shoe against the thwart. Alicia's foot was not short and round like a smoothing iron, the Andalusian shape so much admired in Spain; she had a neatly turned ankle, a high instep, and if the sole of her shoe was a shade long, it was not two inches wide.

The Commodore remained on shore, — not that his rank kept him there, but his weight, which would have proved too much for the light craft. He waited for his niece at the landing-place, and carefully wrapped her in a mantle, lest she should take cold; then the boat having been made fast to the mooring post, the trio returned to the castle to lunch. It was delightful to see Alicia, who usually ate no more than a wren, put her pearly teeth into a slice of York ham cut thin as paper, and make away with a roll without leaving a single crumb for the gold fish in the basin.

How swiftly pass away happy days! Every week Paul postponed his departure; the glorious foliage in the park began to wear the russet livery of autumn, and light white mists rose in the morning from the lake. In spite of the constant raking in which the gardener indulged, the dead leaves strewed the gravel of the drive; innumerable little pearls of frost glittered upon the sward of the bowling green, and in the evening the magpies might be seen squabbling in the tops of the leafless trees.

Paul's anxious gaze saw Alicia growing paler, and her colour diminish to two little spots on her cheeks. She often felt chilly, and the hottest coal fire failed to



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Paul's anxious gaze saw Alicia growing paler

warm her. The doctor seemed anxious, and his last prescription was to the effect that Alicia must spend the winter in Pisa and the spring in Naples.

Paul had been recalled to France by family affairs; Alicia and the Commodore were on their way to Italy, and the party had separated at Folkestone. No word had been spoken, but Alicia looked on herself as engaged to Paul, and the Commodore had squeezed his hand in significant fashion. It is only a son-in-law's fingers that one squeezes so unmercifully.

Paul, compelled to wait six long months, which to his impatience seemed six centuries, had had the delight of finding Alicia freed from the languor from which she had been suffering, and radiant with health. The child had made way wholly to the maiden, and he thought with intoxicating happiness that the Commodore would raise no objections when he should ask for her hand.

Lulled by these pleasant thoughts, he fell asleep and slept until day. Naples was already beginning its riot of noise; the sellers of iced water were shouting their ware; the keepers of cook-shops held out to the passers-by meats stuck on poles; bending from their windows, the lazy housekeepers lowered with

a string their market baskets, which they drew up again laden with provisions, tomatoes, fish, and great pieces of pumpkin. The public scriveners, in rusty black coats and a pen behind their ear, sat down at their tables; the money changers were arranging in little piles, on their boards, grani, carlini, and ducats; the coachmen drove their skeleton horses at a gallop in quest of early customers, and the bells in every belfry were joyously ringing out the Angelus.

Paul, wrapped in his dressing-gown, leaned on the rail of the balcony. From his window he could see Santa Lucia Castello dell' Ove, and an immense stretch of sea as far as Mount Vesuvius and the blue promontory on which showed white the vast casini of Castellamare and the distant villas of Sorrento. The sky was free from clouds, save one light fleck that drew nearer the city, driven onwards by a faint breeze. Paul fixed upon it that strange glance to which I have before drawn attention. Forthwith other vapours united with the single cloudlet, and soon a dark pall of cloud stretched out over Castle Saint Elmo. Great drops of rain pattered down upon the lava pavement, and in a few minutes turned into one of the torrential rains which transform the streets of Naples into

torrents, and sweep dogs, and even donkeys into the gutters. The surprised multitude of pedestrians scattered in search of shelter; the open-air stalls moved in haste, not without the loss of a part of their wares, and the rain, left in possession of the battle-field swept in white gusts upon the deserted quay of Santa Lucia.

The huge facchino whom Paddy had smitten with such vigour, and who was leaning under a balcony, somewhat sheltered by the projection, had not joined the universal rout and gazed with deeply meditative glance upon the window whereon Paul d'Aspremont was leaning.

His thoughts found expression in words which he grumbled out with an angry look: —

"The skipper of the 'Leopold' would have done better to chuck that *forestiere* overboard."

And putting his hand into the opening of his coarse linen shirt, he touched the bag of amulets hung round his neck by a string.

IV

THE weather speedily cleared, in a few minutes the bright sunshine had dried the last drops of the shower, and the multitude again swarmed joyously upon the quay. But Timberio, the porter, seemed not to change his opinion of the young Frenchman, and prudently transported his penates beyond the range of the hotel windows. When some lazzaroni of his friends expressed surprise at his giving up a good stand in favour of one much less advantageous, he replied, shaking his head with a look of mystery: —

"Whoever wants it can have it; I know what I know."

Paul breakfasted in his room, either through reserve or disdain, for he did not care to mix with the public. Then he dressed, and while waiting until it was time for him to call on Miss Ward, he visited the Studj Museum. He admired rather inattentively the valuable collection of Campanian vases, the bronzes found in the ruins of Pompeii, the verdigrised brazen Greek

helmet which still contains the head of the soldier that wore it, the piece of hardened mud that has preserved, like a mould, the imprint of the lovely torso of a young woman surprised by the eruption of Vesuvius in the country house of Arrius Diomedes, the Farnese Hercules and his wonderful muscles, the Flora, the archaic Minerva, the two Balbi, and the magnificent statue of Aristides, the most perfect work perhaps that antiquity has handed down to us. But a lover is not one to appreciate very enthusiastically the monuments of art; to him, the least glimpse of the beloved head is worth more than all the marbles of Greece and Rome.

Having managed somehow to wear out two or three hours in the Studj, he sprang into a carriage and started for the country house where dwelt Miss Ward. The coachman, with that quick perception of love that is characteristic of Southern natures, drove his Rosinantes at break-neck speed, and soon the carriage drew up in front of the pillars, surmounted by vases with aloes growing in them, that I have already described. The same servant came to open the gate; her hair still curled rebelliously, and, as before, her dress consisted simply of a coarse linen chemise with coloured thread

embroideries on the sleeves and round the neck, and of a skirt of thick stuff, with transversal stripes, such as is worn by the women of Procida. Her legs, I must own were bare, and she trod the dust with feet that a sculptor would have admired. On her breast hung from a black cord a bundle of curiously shaped charms of horn and coral, on which, to Vicè's evident satisfaction, Paul's glance rested.

Miss Alicia was on the terrace, that being her favourite spot. An Indian hammock, of red and blue cotton, ornamented with feathers, was suspended from two of the pillars that supported the vine-leaf roof, and in it was swinging the young girl, dressed in a light wrapper of écru China silk, the accordion pleats of which she was pitilessly crushing. On her feet, the tips of which showed through the netting of the hammock, she wore slippers of aloe fibre, and her lovely bare arms were crossed above her head in the attitude of the Cleopatra of antiquity, for, although it was only the beginning of May, the heat was already extreme, and innumerable crickets were singing in shrill chorus in the neighbouring bushes.

The Commodore, in planter's dress, and seated on a cane arm-chair, pulled with great regularity the rope

that set the hammock swinging, and the group was completed by a third personage, Count d'Altavilla, a young Neapolitan dandy, whose presence caused Paul's brows to contract in the fashion that gave him an expression of diabolical wickedness.

The Count, indeed, was one of those men whom one does not much care to see by the side of the woman one loves. He was of high stature and perfectly proportioned; his hair, as black as jet, and clustering in thick masses, set off his smooth and well-shapen forehead; the brilliant Neapolitan sun sparkled in his eyes, and his large, strong teeth, clear as pearls, shone the brighter by contrast with his crimson lips and his olive complexion. The one objection which a person of fastidious taste could have made to the Count was that he was too handsome.

As for his clothes, d'Altavilla sent to London for them, and the severest dandy would have approved of his get-up. The one Italian touch in his whole dress was his shirt studs, which were too costly and showy, betraying the Southerner's love of jewelry. It may be also that anywhere but in Naples people might have thought it in bad taste for him to be wearing a collection of bifurcated branches of coral, of hands, in Vesu-

vius lava, with closed fingers or brandished dagger, of dogs lying down with outstretched paws, of bits of horn, black or white, and other similar trifles suspended from his watch chain by a ring, but it needed only a turn down the Strada di Toledo (Via di Roma), or along the Villa Reale to ascertain that the wearing of these charms was not a mark of eccentricity on the Count's part.

When Paul d'Aspremont came up, the Count, at Miss Ward's urgent request was singing one of those exquisite Neapolitan popular airs, whose author is nameless, and a single one of which, picked up by a composer, suffices to secure the success of an opera. Gordigiani's charming romances may give some idea of them to those who have not heard such airs sung by a lazzarone, a fisherman, or a trovatella on the Chiaja beach or on the pier. They are composed of the sigh of the breeze, a moonbeam, the scent of an orange tree and the beating of the heart.

Alicia, with her pretty English voice, which was not quite true, hummed the motive, that she wished to remember, and nodded in friendly fashion to Paul, who, annoyed at the presence of the handsome young man, looked at her with no very amiable glance.

One of the cords of the hammock broke, and Miss Ward slipped to the ground, though without hurting herself, and six hands were simultaneously outstretched towards her. The young lady was already up, blushing rosy red, for it is "improper" to fall when men are present. Yet not one of the chaste folds of her dress was disarranged.

"I do not understand it," said the Commodore; "I tested the ropes myself, and Alicia is light as a feather."

Count d'Altavilla shook his head in a mysterious fashion, and though it was plain that he attributed the breaking of the rope to a very different cause than Miss Ward's weight, he kept silence, like a well-bred man that he was, and contented himself with rattling the bunch of charms on his chain.

Like all men who turn sulky and cross when in the company of a rival they fear may prove dangerous, instead of becoming more gracious and amiable, Paul d'Aspremont, although well used to society, could not manage to conceal his ill-temper. He replied in monosyllables, let the conversation fall, and when he looked at d'Altavilla, his glance assumed its sinister expression, and the yellow streaks twisted and writhed

under the gray transparency of his eyes like water-snakes in a spring.

Every time Paul looked at him in that way, the Count, with a gesture apparently mechanical, plucked a flower from a jardinière that stood near him and threw it in such a way that it should cross the direction of the angry glance.

"What are you ravaging my jardinière for?" exclaimed Miss Ward, who observed his action. "What harm have my poor flowers done to you that you should behead them?"

"Nothing, Miss Ward; it is purely a nervous affection," answered the Count as he nipped off a superb rose which he sent flying after the other blooms.

"You make *me* dreadfully nervous," said Alicia, "and without knowing it, you are shocking one of my fancies. I have never picked a single flower; a bouquet inspires me with a sort of terror; the blooms of which it is composed are dead flowers, the bodies of roses, vervain or periwinkles, and their scent has something sepulchral."

"By way of expiating the murders I have just committed," said the Count with a bow, "I shall send you a hundred baskets of living flowers."

Paul had risen, and was twisting the brim of his hat with a constrained look as though he intended to take leave.

"Surely you are not going already?" said Miss Ward.

"I have letters to write; important letters."

"That is a pretty thing to say," returned the young girl with a pout. "Are there any letters of importance save those you write to me?"

"Do stay, Paul," said the Commodore. "I have laid out a plan for the evening, subject to the approbation of my niece. I propose that we shall first go to drink a glass of water at the Santa Lucia fountain; it is true the water smells like rotten eggs, but it gives one an appetite. Then we shall go and eat a dozen or two of oysters, both white and red, at the fish-house, and dine in some thoroughly Neapolitan osteria, under an arbour, and drink Falernium and Lacryma Christi, winding up with a visit to Signor Pulcinello. The Count could explain to us the fine points of the dialect."

Mr. D'Aspremont did not seem to be much taken with the plan, and he withdrew with a cold bow. D'Altavilla remained a few moments longer, but as

Miss Ward, put out at Paul's departure, did not adopt the Commodore's proposal, he also took his leave.

Two hours later, Alicia received an immense number of pots of the rarest plants in bloom, and what surprised her much more, a huge pair of horns of the Sicilian ox, transparent as jasper, and polished as agate, fully three feet in length and ending in menacing black points. They were splendidly mounted in gilded bronze, so that they could be placed, tips up, on a mantelpiece, a bracket, or a cornice.

Vicè, who had helped the porters to unpack both the flowers and the horns, seemed to understand the object of this curious gift, and placed the superb crescents, which might have been thought to have belonged to the divine bull that bore away Europa, full in sight on the stone table, and said : —

" Now we are properly protected."

" What do you mean, Vicè ? " asked Miss Ward.

" Nothing, except that the French signor has very queer eyes."

V

THE hour for meals had long since passed, and the coal fires that during the day turned the kitchen of the Hôtel de Rome into a crater of Vesuvius, were slowly dying out in glowing embers under the sheet-iron extinguishers. The stew-pans had been hung on their respective nails and glittered like a row of bucklers on the rail of a trireme. A yellow brass lamp, like those found in the ruins of Pompeii, was suspended by a triple chain to the main beam in the ceiling, and with its three wicks dipping into the oil, lighted up the centre of the great kitchen, the corners of which remained in shadow.

The luminous beams falling from above illumined, with most picturesque play of light and shade, a group of characteristic figures collected around the thick wooden table, cut and slashed in every direction with knife marks, and that stood in the centre of the great hall whose walls the smoke of the cooking had turned to the dark brown so dear to the painters of Caravaggio's school. Unquestionably neither Spagnoletto nor

Salvator Rosa, with their bold love of truth, would have disdained the models collected there by chance, or, to be more accurate, by nightly custom.

First, there was the *chef*, Virgilio Falsacappa, a very important personage, of colossal stature and tremendous size, who, had he but worn a Roman toga instead of a white duck jacket, might have passed for one of the guests of Vitellius. His strongly marked features formed a sort of serious caricature of the types of certain medals of antiquity; his eyes, cut like those in stage masks, were topped by bushy black eyebrows sticking out half an inch; an enormous nose overshadowed a broad mouth apparently provided with three rows of teeth like a shark's. A dewlap, as deep as that of the Farnese bull, joined the chin — in which was a dimple fit to hold a fist — with a muscular neck, heavily veined and athletic-looking. Bushy whiskers, each of which would have sufficed to provide a sapper with a reasonable beard, framed in the face, which was marked with violet spots. His hair was black, curly, and shiny, mingled with a few silvery threads, and clustered on his head in short curls, while his bull neck, with its three deep wrinkles, overlapped the collar of his jacket. In the lobes of his ears, pushed

up by the protuberances of a pair of jaws capable of chewing up an ox in the course of a day, glittered silver rings as large as the disc of the moon. Such was Master Virgilio Falsacappa, who, with his apron pulled up on the hip and his knife stuck in a wooden sheath, looked more like a torturer than a cook.

Next came Timberio, the porter, who, thanks to the exercise necessitated by his trade and the sobriety of his regimen, — consisting of a handful of half cooked macaroni, dusted over with cacio-cavallo, a slice of water-melon and a glass of snow-water, — was comparatively thin, but who, if well-fed, would certainly have been as stout as Falsacappa, so truly did his huge frame seem intended to upbear an enormous bulk of flesh. His dress consisted simply of a pair of drawers, a long brown stuff vest, and a coarse cloak thrown over his shoulder.

Striking also was the appearance of Scazziga, the coachman who drove Paul d'Aspremont, and who was leaning against the table. He had a clever face, but irregular features with an expression of simplicity and craftiness combined; a feigned smile flitted on his mocking lips, and his agreeable manners showed that

he was constantly serving well bred people. His garments, purchased from a dealer in second-hand clothing, had a look of livery about them of which he was particularly proud, and which, in his opinion, placed him a long way higher up the social scale than the rough Timberio. He sprinkled his talk with English and French words that did not always fit in with the meaning of his remarks, but which none the less excited the admiration of the kitchen maids and scullions, who were amazed at his wonderful knowledge.

Somewhat in the background stood two young maids whose features, though of course less noble, recalled the well known type of the heads on Syracusan coins: the low forehead, the nose running straight from the brow, the somewhat thick lips, the broad, full chin. Their blackish blue hair was dressed in bandeaux, which met behind their heads in heavy chignons, stuck with coral-headed pins, and triple necklaces of the same material were wound round their caryatid-like necks, the muscles of which were strengthened by their habit of carrying their burdens upon their heads. No doubt dandies would have looked with contempt at these poor girls in whose veins ran the untainted

blood of the splendid races of fair Greece, but an artist, on seeing them, would at once have pulled out his sketch-book.

If my reader has ever seen that painting by Murillo in which angels are cooking, I need not describe the heads of the three or four curly-headed scullions who completed the group.

The company was discussing a serious question which concerned Mr. Paul d'Aspremont, the French traveller who had come in the steamer. The kitchen was sitting in judgment upon the guest.

It was Timberio, the porter, who was speaking, and he paused between each of his remarks, like a popular orator, in order to allow his hearers to thoroughly grasp their full meaning, and to express assent or dissent.

"Follow me carefully," the orator was just then saying. "The 'Leopold' is an honest Tuscan steamer, against which there is nothing to be said, save that it carries round too many English heretics."

"English heretics spend their money freely," put in Scazziga, whom the receipt of tips rendered more tolerant.

"No doubt; the least a heretic can do when a Chris-

tian works for him, is to reward him handsomely, so as to diminish the humiliation."

"It does not humiliate me to drive a *forestiere* in my carriage. I do not follow the trade of beast of burden like you."

"Am I not just as good a Christian as you?" replied the porter, frowning and clenching his fists.

"Let Timberio have his say," chorussed the rest of the company, afraid of seeing the interesting account turn into a dispute.

"You will allow," continued the orator, soothed by this, "that the weather was superb when the 'Leopold' entered the harbour."

"Certainly, Timberio," said the *chef* with majestic condescension.

"The sea was smooth as glass," continued the facchino; "yet a huge billow tossed Gennaro's boat so roughly that he fell overboard with two or three of his comrades. Is that not out of the way? For Gennaro is a seaman and could dance the tarantella on a yard without the help of a balancing-pole."

"Perhaps he had drunk a little too much Asprino," put in Scazziga, the rationalist of the company.

"He had not even had a glass of lemonade," went

on Timberio. "But there was on board that steamer a gentleman who looked at him in a peculiar fashion. You take me?"

"Yes, indeed," replied the chorus, every one of them extending the first and fourth fingers together as if drilled to the business.

"Now that gentleman was no other than Mr. Paul d'Aspremont," added Timberio.

"The one in number three," asked the *chef*, "who has his dinner in his room?"

"The very same," replied the younger and prettier of the maids. "Never have I come across a sourer, more disagreeable and more conceited man; he never said a word to me or even looked at me, and yet I am well worth looking at, say all the gentlemen."

"You are worth a good deal more than that, my lovely Gelsomina," said Timberio gallantly; "but it is lucky for you that the stranger did not look at you."

"You are altogether too superstitious," interjected Scazziga, whose intercourse with foreigners had made him something of a sceptic.

"And by dint of frequenting heretics, *you* will end in not believing in Saint Januarius."

"Because Gennaro happened to tumble overboard, that is no reason for attributing an evil influence to Mr. Paul d'Aspremont," went on Scazziga, standing up for his customer.

"You want more proof, do you? Well, this morning I saw him at the window, looking at a cloudlet no larger than a down-flake out of a burst pillow, when at once black clouds collected and it rained so hard that the dogs could drink standing up."

But Scazziga was not yet convinced and shook his head incredulously.

"And the servant is no better than his master," went on Timberio. "The booted monkey must be in league with the devil, or he could never have knocked me out, when I could kill him with a flip of the finger."

"I am of Timberio's opinion," said the *chef*, majestically. "The stranger eats little; he sent down the stuffed zucchetti, the chicken stew, and the macaroni and tomatoes which I had myself prepared for him. There must be some reason for such sobriety. Why should a rich man refuse tasty dishes and content himself with egg soup and a slice of cold meat?"

"He is red-haired," said Gelsomina, as she passed her hand through her own thick raven locks.

"And a bit goggle-eyed," added Pepita, the other maid.

"And his eyes are very close to his nose," went on Timberio.

"And the wrinkle between his eyebrows is in the shape of a horse-shoe," said, by way of completing the indictment, the huge Virgilio Falsacappa. "Therefore he is —"

"Do not say the word; there is no need of it," cried the chorus, save and except the still incredulous Scazziga. "We shall be on our guard."

"And to think that I should get into trouble with the police," said Timberio, "if I were to let drop a three-hundred pound trunk on the head of that accursed *forestiere*."

"It is pretty risky in Scazziga to go about driving him," put in Gelsomina.

"I am on my box; he can see my back only, and his glance cannot cross mine at the right angle. Besides, I do not believe in the whole business."

"You are a heathen, Scazziga," said the huge Palforio, the Herculean cook. "You will come to a bad end."

While the servants were thus engaged in discussing him, Paul, whose temper had been upset by finding Count d'Altavilla with Miss Ward, had gone for a walk at the Villa Reale, and more than once the wrinkle between his brows deepened and his glance became fixed. He thought he caught sight of Alicia in a carriage with the Count, and he hurried to the carriage door, putting on his eye-glasses to make sure he was not mistaken. It was not Alicia, however, but a lady who, at a distance, resembled her. The horses, no doubt startled by Paul's rush, bolted.

Paul sat down to eat an ice at the Cafe de l'Europe, on the Palace Square. A number of persons looked at him attentively, and then changed their seats, making a curious gesture at the same time.

He entered the Pulcinella Theatre, where a play *tutto da ridere* was being performed. The actor got confused in the middle of his comic improvisation and remained dumb. He pulled himself together, however, but in the very middle of one of his by-plays, his black false nose came off and he found it impossible to replace it. By way of excusing himself he explained the cause of the accident by a rapid gesture, for Paul's glance, now fixed upon him, prevented his

going on. The spectators nearest Paul vanished one after another. He rose to go out, unconscious of the effect he was producing, and in the lobby he heard people whispering a strange word, the meaning of which he did not understand: —

"A jettatore! a jettatore!"

VI

THE day after he had sent her the horns, Count d'Altavilla paid Miss Ward a visit. He found the young English lady drinking tea with her uncle, exactly as if she had been in a yellow brick house at Ramsgate, instead of in Naples upon a whitewashed terrace, and surrounded by fig trees, cacti, and aloes, for one of the distinguishing traits of the Anglo-Saxon race is the persistence of its habits, however contrary to the climate they may be. The Commodore was beaming. By means of artificial ice, manufactured with the aid of a chemical apparatus — for snow only is brought from the mountains behind Castellamare — he had succeeded in keeping the butter in a solid condition, and he was just then engaged in spreading a pat of it upon a thin slice of bread.

After the first commonplaces which form the preface of every conversation, and which resemble the preludes with which pianists try an instrument before they

begin their performance, Alicia, suddenly breaking away from conventionalities, abruptly asked the young Neapolitan Count: —

"What do you mean by the strange gift of a pair of horns that came with the flowers? All I could get out of my maid Vicè was that they are a preservative against the *fascino*."

"Vicè is right," replied the Count d'Altavilla with a bow.

"But what is the fascino?" went on the young lady. "I am not familiar with your superstitions — your African notions, for no doubt it has to do with some popular belief."

"The fascino is the pernicious influence exercised by a person endowed, or afflicted rather, with the evil eye."

"I am pretending to understand you, so that you will not have too low an opinion of my capacity if I confess that the meaning of your words escapes me," said Alicia. "You explain the unknown by the unknown, and *evil eye* is, so far as I am concerned, as unintelligible as the expression *fascino*. Like the character in the play, I understand Latin, but please speak as if I did not."

"I shall explain myself as clearly as possible," replied d'Altavilla; "only pray do not, with British contempt, mistake me for a barbarian, and do not wonder whether under my clothes my skin is tattooed red and blue. I am a civilised man; I was educated in Paris; I speak both French and English; I have read Voltaire; I believe in steam engines, in railways, and in a double Chamber, just like Stendhal; I eat macaroni with a fork; in the morning I wear Suède gloves, coloured kid in the afternoon, and straw-coloured kid in the evening."

The Commodore, who was buttering a second slice of bread, was attracted by this strange preface, and he remained with his knife in the air, gazing at d'Altavilla with his Northern blue eyes, the shade of which contrasted so funnily with his brick-like complexion.

"Your account of yourself is quite reassuring," said Miss Ward with a smile, "and it would be very rude of me to suspect you of being a barbarian. But surely you must have something very dreadful to tell me, or else something very absurd, to indulge in such circumlocutions before coming to the point."

"You are right; it is very terrible, very absurd, and even very ridiculous, which is worse," answered the

Count; "and were I with you in London or Paris, I dare say I should laugh at it with you, but here in Naples—"

"You will remain serious. Is not that what you were going to say?"

"Exactly."

"Well, let us get to the fascino," said Miss Ward, impressed, in spite of herself, by the Count's gravity.

"The belief is one that goes back to the farthest antiquity; it is alluded to in the Bible. Vergil mentions it as one who firmly believes in it; the bronze amulets found in Pompeii, Herculaneum, Stabiæ, the protective signs drawn on the houses that have been cleared out, show how widespread that superstition was formerly." D'Altavilla slyly laid stress upon the word *superstition*. "The whole of the East still credits it to-day. Red or green hands are placed upon each front of Moorish houses in order to avert the evil influence. On the Gate of Judgment, in the Alhambra, there is a hand carved on the keystone, which is a proof that if the belief is not well grounded, it is at least very ancient. When an opinion has been held by millions of men for thousands of years, it is probable that it rests upon some positive facts, upon a long

series of observations borne out by events. However well I may think of myself, I find it somewhat difficult to believe that so many persons, some of whom, unquestionably, were illustrious, enlightened, and learned, should have been so egregiously mistaken in the matter and that I alone should see it clearly."

"There is an obvious retort to your argument," broke in Miss Ward. "Was not polytheism the religion believed in by Hesiod, Homer, Aristotle, Plato, Socrates himself, — as witness his sacrificing a cock to Esculapius, —and numberless other men of undoubted genius?"

"That is true; but no one nowadays sacrifices bulls to Jupiter."

"They are better made into beefsteaks and rumpsteaks," sagely remarked the Commodore, who had always been shocked at the custom of burning the fat legs of victims upon coals, as related by Homer.

"Doves are no longer offered to Venus, nor peacocks to Juno, nor he-goats to Bacchus; Christianity has replaced the fair marble dreams with which Greece had filled Olympus. Truth has caused error to disappear, and yet innumerable people still fear the effects of the fascino, or, as it is popularly called, *jettatura*."

"I can understand that the ignorant multitude should fear such an influence," said Miss Ward; "but that a man of your rank and education should share the belief is what amazes me."

"Many who claim to be strong-minded," replied the Count, "hang horns in their windows, nail antlers above their door, and go about covered with amulets. For my part, I make no bones about it, and I am not ashamed to own that when I meet a jettatore, I prefer to cross over to the other side of the street, and that if I cannot avoid his glance, I do my best to conjure it by making the conventional sign; I do it just as readily as would a lazzarone, and I am the safer for it. Numerous misadventures have taught me not to disdain such precautions."

Miss Alicia Ward was a Protestant, brought up in great philosophical freedom of thought, and trained to admit nothing save after examination, so that her lucid reasoning powers rebelled against whatever could not be mathematically explained. The Count's remarks caused her surprise, and at first she assumed that he was merely trying to be amusing, but his calm and convinced manner showed her she was mistaken, though he failed to convince her.

"I grant you," she said, "that the prejudice exists and that it is very widespread; that you are sincerely afraid of the evil eye, and that you are not trying to play upon the credulity of a stranger. But you must give me some physical reason for the existence of this superstitious idea, for, even at the cost of being considered by you wholly devoid of poetic feeling, I am very incredulous. The fantastic, the mysterious, the occult, the inexplicable have very little hold upon me."

"You surely admit, Miss Ward," went on the Count, "the power of the human eye? The light of heaven mingles in it with the reflection of the soul; the pupil is a lens which concentrates the beams of life, and intellectual electricity flashes forth from that small opening. Does not a woman's glance pierce the hardest heart? Does not a hero's inspire a whole army? Does not the physician's look tame a madman as effectually as a cold douche? Does not a mother's glance repel lions?"

"You plead your cause eloquently," answered Miss Ward, shaking her pretty head. "But you must forgive me if I still entertain doubts."

"What of the bird, then, that, fluttering with terror

and uttering pitiful cries, descends from the top of the tree whence it might fly away, to fall into the maw of the serpent that fascinates it? Is it impelled by a prejudice? Has it heard stories of jettatura told in the nests of the feathery gossips? Is not the cause of many an effect beyond the grasp of our organs? Are the miasmata of malaria, of plague, of cholera visible? No eye can see the electric fluid on the lightning rod, yet the electricity is drawn down it. Why is it absurd to suppose that from the black, blue, or gray disc called the eye there issues a beam that may be beneficent or deadly? Why should not that effluvium be fortunate or unfortunate according to the mode of its emission and the angle at which it impinges upon the object it strikes?"

"It seems to me," said the Commodore, "that there is something to be said in favour of the Count's argument. For my part, I have never been able to look at a toad's yellow eyes without feeling intolerable heat in the stomach, just as if I had swallowed an emetic; yet the poor reptile had more reason to fear than I, since I could crush it with my heel."

"Ah! uncle," said Miss Ward, "if you are going to side with Count d'Altavilla, I shall have the worst

of it. I am not fit to cope with the two of you. Although I might raise many an objection to that ocular electricity of which no physicist has spoken, I am willing, for the sake of argument, to admit its existence; but I do not perceive in what way the huge horns with which you have presented me can efficaciously protect one against its fatal effects."

"Just as the point of the lightning-rod diverts the lightning, so do the sharp points of the horns upon which the jettatore's glance falls divert the malevolent fluid and deprive it of its dangerous electricity. Outstretched fingers and coral amulets perform the same service."

"What you have been telling me, Count," returned Miss Ward, "is very mysterious, but so far as I can make it out, I am under the spell of a most dangerous jettatore, and you sent me the horns to protect me against him."

"I fear that is the case," replied the Count, with an accent of deep conviction.

"I should just like to see one of those squinting rascals trying to fascinate my niece," exclaimed the Commodore. "I am over sixty, but I have not yet forgotten how to strike straight from the shoulder."

And as he said this, he closed his fist, pressing his thumb against the folded fingers.

"Two fingers are enough, sir," said d'Altavilla; at the same time placing the Commodore's fingers in the correct position. "Jettatura is usually an unconscious act, and is exercised unwittingly by those who possess the fatal gift. Often, indeed, jettatori deplore its effects more than any one else, once they have become aware of their deadly power. They should therefore be avoided, not ill treated. Besides, their influence may be neutralised or at least attenuated, by horns, outstretched fingers, or forked branches of coral."

"Very strange, in truth," said the Commodore, impressed in spite of himself by d'Altavilla's seriousness.

"I was not aware that I was so greatly haunted by jettatori. I scarcely ever leave the terrace, save, in the evening, to drive with my uncle along the Villa Reale, and I have never noticed anything that might justify your belief," said the young lady, whose curiosity was awakened, though she was as incredulous as ever. "To whom do your suspicions point?"

"They are not suspicions, Miss Ward; I am absolutely certain," replied the Neapolitan Count.

"Pray, then, reveal to us the name of the fatal being," returned Miss Ward, with a trace of mockery.

D'Altavilla remained silent.

"It is well to know whom we should be on our guard against," added the Commodore.

The young nobleman appeared to be thinking deeply; then rose, walked up to Miss Ward's uncle, bowed respectfully to him, and said: —

"Sir, I have the honour to ask for your niece's hand in marriage."

At this unexpected request, Alicia blushed rosy red and the Commodore's face turned scarlet, from red that it had been.

Undoubtedly Count d'Altavilla might be a suitor for Miss Ward's hand; he belonged to one of the oldest and noblest families in Naples; he was handsome, young, wealthy, and in favour at Court; he was thoroughly well bred, and irreproachable in demeanour. His request, therefore, was entirely proper, but it came so suddenly, so strangely, it had apparently so little to do with the conversation that had been going on, that the amazement of uncle and niece was justified. Nor did d'Altavilla appear either surprised or discouraged by it, and he awaited the reply with firm mien.

"My dear Count," at last said the Commodore, when he had somewhat recovered from his surprise, "your request astonishes as well as honours me. The truth is that I do not know how to answer you; I have not consulted my niece. We were talking of fascino, jettatura, horns, amulets, open and closed hands, of all sorts of things that have nothing to do with marriage, and then all of a sudden you ask me for Alicia's hand! That is not logical, and you must not be annoyed if I am somewhat mixed. The match would certainly be quite suitable, but I fancied my niece had other intentions. It is true, on the other hand, that an old seadog like me is not one to read fluently a young girl's heart —"

Alicia, perceiving that her uncle was floundering about, profited by his pausing for breath to put an end to a situation that was becoming embarrassing, and said to the Neapolitan: —

"Count, when a gentleman loyally asks for an honest girl's hand, she has no right to take offence, but she may feel surprise at the strange manner in which the request is made. I was asking you to tell me the name of the jettatore whose influence, according to you, may prove fatal to me, and you suddenly prefer to my

uncle a request the motive for which I do not clearly perceive."

"My reason is," answered d'Altavilla, "that a gentleman does not care to denounce another man, and that a husband alone has the right to defend his wife. But pray take some time before deciding. Until then the horns, placed in a sufficiently conspicuous place, will, I believe, avail to protect you against any unfortunate consequences."

Whereupon the Count rose, bowed low, and went out.

Vicè, the crinkly-haired maid, who was coming to clear away the tea things, had heard the end of the conversation as she was slowly ascending the terrace steps. She nourished against Paul d'Aspremont the fullest aversion natural in an Abruzzi peasant, scarcely tamed by two or three years of domestic service, for a *forestiere* suspected of jettatura. Besides, she thought Count d'Altavilla a splendid man, and could not understand that Miss Ward should prefer to him a pale, meagre fellow whom she, Vicè, would not have had anything to do with, even had he not had the fascino. Therefore, unappreciative of Count d'Altavilla's delicate methods, and desiring to withdraw her mistress, whom

she loved, from a hurtful influence, Vicè bent to Miss Ward's ear and said to her: —

"I know the name that Count d'Altavilla will not tell you."

"And I forbid you to speak it, Vicè, if you care to retain my favour," answered Alicia. "Such superstitions are positively shameful, and I shall brave them like a Christian girl who fears God alone."

VII

JETTATORE! Jettatore! These words were certainly addressed to me," said Paul d'Aspremont to himself, as he returned to his hotel. "What they mean I do not know, but they were evidently intended for an insult or a mockery. What is there strange, peculiar, or ridiculous about me that attracts such unpleasant attention? Though one is not a good judge of one's self, it seems to me that I am neither handsome nor ugly, neither tall nor short, neither stout nor thin, and that I ought to be able to go about without attracting notice. There is nothing eccentric in my dress; I am not adorned with a turban with lighted tapers, like Mr. Jourdain in the ceremonial scene in the *Bourgeois gentilhomme;* I do not wear a jacket with a sun embroidered in gold on the back; I do not go about with a negro in front of me playing on the cymbals. My personality, which, for the matter of that, is wholly unknown in Naples, is concealed under the ordinary dress, the domino of modern civilisation, and I am in every respect like the

dandies who walk up and down the Strada di Toledo or on the Largo del Palazzo Reale, save that I have a rather quieter necktie, not so large a breastpin, a less gorgeously embroidered shirt-front, not so loud a waistcoat, not so many gold chains, and that my hair is very much less curled.

"That may be it! My hair is perhaps not curled enough. To-morrow I shall have it done up by the hair-dresser in the hotel.

"Yet the people here are used to seeing strangers, and a few slight differences in my dress do not account for the mysterious word and the strange gesture called out by my presence. Besides, I have noticed an expression of antipathy and terror on the faces of the people who drew out of my way. What can I possibly have done to them, since I have never met them before? Everywhere a traveller — who is but a passing shadow that returns not — excites indifference only, unless he happens to come from some distant place and is of an unknown race; and every week the steamers land on the pier thousands of tourists in every respect like me. Nobody troubles about them, save the facchini, the hotel-keepers, and the guides. I have not killed my brother, for I never had one;

consequently I cannot be bearing about the brand of Cain upon my brow. Yet men are startled at sight of me and move away. I do not remember having ever produced such an effect in Paris, London, Vienna, or in any of the towns where I have lived. I have been thought proud, disdainful, reserved at times. I have been told that I affected the English sneer, that I was aping Lord Byron, but everywhere I have been received as a gentleman should be, and my advances, though infrequent, have been all the more appreciated on that account. Surely the three days' trip from Marseilles to Naples cannot have altered me to the extent of having become odious or grotesque, for more than one woman has ere now singled me out, and I have won the heart of Alicia Ward, a charming girl, a heavenly creature, one of Thomas Moore's angels!"

These reflections, undoubtedly quite sensible, somewhat calmed Paul d'Aspremont, and he succeeded in convincing himself that he had attached to the exaggerated pantomime of the Neapolitans, who gesticulate more than any other people, a wholly gratuitous meaning.

It was late. All the guests, save Paul, had retired to their rooms, and Gelsomina, one of the servants

whose portrait I sketched in the account of the kitchen council presided over by Virgilio Falsacappa, was waiting to lock the doors as soon as Paul should have returned. Nanella, the other maid, whose turn it was to sit up, had begged her braver companion to take her place, as she herself desired to avoid the *forestiere* who was suspected of jettatura. Gelsomina, therefore, was armed at all points; a huge bunch of amulets bristled on her bosom; five little coral horns hung, instead of vine leaves, from the facetted pearls in her ears; her hand, ready outstretched, extended its fore and fourth fingers in a position so accurate that it would certainly have met with commendation from the reverend Father Andrea de Jorio, author of the *Mimicha degli antichi investigata nel gestire napoletano.*

The brave Gelsomina, concealing her hand behind a fold of her skirt, handed the candlestick to Mr. d'Aspremont, and fixed upon him a sharp, steady, almost provocative glance, so singular in its expression that the young man cast down his eyes, a result that appeared to give remarkable pleasure to the handsome girl. As she stood there, motionless and erect, holding out the candlestick with a statuesque gesture, her profile brought out by the light, her glance fixed and

flashing, she looked like the Nemesis of antiquity overawing a criminal.

When d'Aspremont had ascended the stairs and the sound of his footsteps had died out, Gelsomina threw back her head with an air of triumph, and said: —

"Well, I fairly looked him down, that ugly fellow, whom may Saint Januarius confound. I am sure no harm will come to me."

Paul had a bad night of it, and his slumbers were troubled by all sorts of strange, tormenting dreams connected with the thoughts that had filled his mind during the course of the evening. He seemed to be surrounded by monstrous, grimacing faces expressing hatred, anger, and terror; then these would vanish, and he saw himself threatened by long, lean, bony fingers, with knotty joints, that came out of the darkness, reddened by a light of Hell, and making cabalistic signs. The nails on these fingers, curved like tigers' claws and vultures' talons, came closer and closer to his face and appeared to seek to tear his eyes out. By a supreme effort he managed to brush aside these hands that were winged like bats, but the hands were followed by heads of bulls, buffaloes, and stags, the whitened skulls filled with a life that was death, and which,

goring him with horns or antlers, forced him to leap into the sea, where he tore his limbs upon a forest of coral with pointed or bifurcated branches. Then a billow would cast him ashore, worn out, broken, half dead, and, like Byron's Don Juan, he seemed to see, in his fainting condition, a lovely head bending down over him. It was that, not of Haidee, but of Alicia, more beautiful than the imaginary being created by the poet. The maiden strove in vain to draw up on the sand the body the sea endeavoured to snatch back, and called on Vicè, the tawny maid, to help her, but the latter refused with ferocious laughter. Alicia's strength gave way, and Paul fell back into the waters.

These confused and terrifying fancies, horrible in their vagueness, and others still more vague, and recalling the shapeless phantoms that half emerge from the dense shadows of Goya's aquatintas, tortured the dreamer until early dawn. His soul, freed by the exhaustion of the body, appeared to divine what his waking thought failed to understand, and strove to translate its presentiments into images in the camera obscura of dreams.

Paul rose tired out, uneasy, dimly conscious of some mystery in these nightmares, but not daring to sound it.

He turned round and round the fatal secret, closing his eyes in order not to see, and closing his ears in order not to hear it. Never had he felt so depressed. He even lost faith in Alicia; the Count's air of satisfied conceit, the complaisant manner in which the young girl listened to him, the approving air of the Commodore, all these things recurred to him full of painful particulars, filled his heart with bitterness, and deepened his melancholy.

Day has the power to dispel troubles caused by the visions of the night. When the dawn's golden shafts flash into the room through the parted curtains, Smarra, annoyed, flees away flapping its bat-like wings. The sun was shining joyously, the sky was clear, and the blue sea sparkled with innumerable spangles. Little by little Paul grew calmer; he forgot his painful dreams and the strange impressions felt the evening before, or, when he did give a thought to them, he blamed himself for his folly in dwelling upon them.

He took a turn round Chiaja to enjoy the Neapolitan excitability. The dealers were crying their wares in queer musical phrases in a popular dialect unintelligible to Paul, who knew Italian only, and with excited gestures and a fury of pantomime unknown in the North.

But every time he stopped before a shop, the dealer looked alarmed, murmured an imprecation in a low voice, and stretched out his first and fourth fingers as if he were about to stab Paul with them. The women, bolder, overwhelmed him with insults and shook their fists in his face.

VIII

ON hearing himself insulted by the Chiaja people, Mr. d'Aspremont imagined that they were addressing to him the coarsely burlesque litanies to which fishwives treat well-dressed persons who happen to traverse the market, but the lively repulsion, the genuine terror visible on every face compelled him to seek some other explanation. He heard once more, but with a threatening accent, the word *jettatore*, which had already struck upon his ear at the San Carlo Theatre; he therefore slowly walked away, without letting his glance, the cause of so much trouble, rest upon anything.

As he passed along the houses trying to escape attention, he came upon a second-hand book-stall. He stopped, turned over and opened some of the books, by way of pulling himself together. He thus turned his back upon the passers-by, and as he half-concealed his face within the pages of the volume, he avoided insult. He had for one moment thought of using his stick upon the shoulders of the rabble, but an undefin-

able superstitious terror that was beginning to lay hold of him had restrained him. He remembered that once, having struck an insolent driver with a light switch, he had hit him on the temple and killed him on the spot, an involuntary murder he had never got over.

Having picked up and put back a number of books in the boxes, he came upon Signor Niccolo Valetta's treatise on *jettatura*, the title of which seemed to flash up before him, as if the book had been placed there by the hand of Fate. He threw to the dealer, who was looking at him with a sarcastic expression of countenance, and rattling the three or four black horns that hung with other charms upon his watch-chain, the six or eight carlini he asked for the book, and hurried back to his hotel to begin the study which was to clear away the doubts which had worried him since his arrival in Naples.

Valetta's book is as widely read in Naples as the *Secrets of Albertus the Great*, *Etteila* or the *Key to Dreams* in Paris. Valetta gives a definition of jettatura, shows by what means it may be recognised, and what are the methods to be resorted to for protection. He divides jettatori into several classes, in accordance with

their power for evil, and discusses every point in connection with this important subject.

If d'Aspremont had come across this book in Paris, he would have glanced carelessly through it as through an old almanac stuffed full of nonsensical tales, and have laughed at the serious manner in which the author treated of such absurdities. But in his present condition, away from his usual surroundings, prepared to credulity by numberless trifling incidents, he perused it with secret horror, like some profane person spelling out of a black-letter folio formulæ for the evocation of spirits and other cabalistic performances. Though he had not sought to penetrate them, the secrets of Hell were being revealed to him, and he was now aware of his fatal gift; he was a jettatore! He had to own it to himself, for he possessed every one of the distinctive marks described by Valetta.

It sometimes happens that a man who believes himself to be enjoying the best of health, opens by chance a medical work and, on reading the pathological description of some disease, perceives that he is suffering from it. Enlightened by the dread knowledge, he feels, as he notes each symptom in the tale, some hidden portion of his organs, some concealed fibre, the

play of which he was ignorant of, quiver with pain, and he turns pale at the thought that death, which he had fancied far distant, is near. Paul experienced just such a feeling.

He went to the mirror and looked at himself with terrifying intensity. The dissonant perfection of features, composed of beauties not usually found together, made him more than ever like the fallen archangel and gleamed with sinister fire out of the dark depths of the mirror. The rays in his pupils writhed like vipers; his eyebrows quivered like a bow from which the deadly shaft has just been shot; the white line in his forehead recalled a cicatrice due to a thunderbolt, and flames of Hell seemed to burn in his auburn hair, while the marble pallor of his complexion brought out more startlingly still each feature of his absolutely terrifying face.

He was frightened at himself. It seemed to him that his glance, reflected by the mirror, returned to him like a poisoned arrow. Imagine Medusa looking at her own hideous, yet charming face in the ruddy reflection of a brazen shield!

It may be objected that it is difficult to believe that a young man of the world, educated in the truths of modern science, and who had lived in the very midst

of a sceptical civilisation, could accept seriously a popular prejudice, and fancy himself endowed with a mysterious deadly power; but to that I answer that common belief exercises an irresistible power of magnetism which masters a man in spite of himself, and with which the individual will cannot always cope successfully. A man may arrive in Naples laughing jettatura to scorn, and end by surrounding himself with horned preventives and by fleeing from every individual whose glance he suspects of evil. But Paul d'Aspremont was in a much more serious situation: he was himself possessed of the fascino, and every one avoided him or made in his presence the protective signs recommended by Signor Valetta. His common-sense rebelled at the thought, yet he could not help acknowledging that he bore every mark characteristic of a jettatore. The human mind, even when most enlightened, has always some dark nook in which crouch the hideous monsters of credulity and where cling the bats of superstition. Ordinary life itself is so full of problems that cannot be solved that impossibility becomes probability. A man may deny everything or believe in everything; from a certain point of view dreams are as true as reality.

Profound melancholy overpowered Paul. He was a monster! Though endowed with a most affectionate disposition and the kindest of hearts, he nevertheless bore misfortune wherever he went. His glance, unconsciously filled with venom, was fatal to those upon whom it rested, even when he looked kindly upon them. He suffered from the horrible privilege of collecting, concentrating, and distilling the morbid miasmas, the dangerous electricity, the fatal influences of the ambient air and scattered them around. A number of incidents in his life, which until now had been unintelligible to him and which he had attributed to chance, now stood out in hideous clearness. He remembered all manner of strange misadventures, of unexplained misfortunes, of causeless catastrophes the reason of which he now understood. Startling coincidences occurred to his mind and confirmed the unhappy opinion he now had of himself.

He went back over his life year by year. He recalled his mother who had died in giving him birth; the unfortunate fate of his young schoolfellows: the one he loved best had been killed by a fall from a tree while he, Paul, was watching him climb it. He recalled the boating excursion on which he had started

so joyously with two of his comrades, and from which he had returned alone, after making desperate efforts to drag from the weeds the bodies of the two poor lads drowned by the upsetting of the craft; the assault at arms in which his foil, the button of which had broken off and transformed the weapon into a sword, had so dangerously wounded his opponent, a young man whom he loved dearly. Unquestionably there could be no rational explanation of these events, although Paul had hitherto believed there was. Now, however, the apparently fortuitous and accidental character of these events appeared to him to depend upon another cause, which he had learned since he had read Valetta's book. The deadly influence, the fascino, the jettatura had evidently a share in these catastrophes. Such a persistent series of misfortunes in connection with one and the same individual was *unnatural.*

A still more recent circumstance recurred to his memory in all its horrible details, and contributed largely to strengthen his unhappy belief.

He often used to attend the performances at Her Majesty's Theatre, in London, having been struck by the grace of a young English ballet-dancer. Without being more taken with her than a man is with a charm-

ing figure in a painting or an engraving, he had got into the habit of following her with his eyes in the midst of her companions in the ballet, through the wildering maze of the evolutions of the dance. He had got fond of her sad, gentle face, of her delicate pallor which the exertion of the dance never flushed, of her beautiful silky, shining fair locks, crowned, as the case might be, with stars or flowers, of her glance that lost itself in space, of her limbs that shyly lifted the clouds of gauze and shone under the silk like the marble limbs of some statue of antiquity. Every time she flashed past the footlights, he saluted her with a quiet, furtive sign of admiration, or put up his glasses in order to see her better.

One night, in the circular flight of a waltz, the dancer swept closer to the dazzling line of fire that, in a theatre, separates the world of reality from the realm of fancy. Her airy sylph-like draperies fluttered like the wings of a dove about to take to flight, when a tongue of flame shot up, blue and white, and reached the light stuff. In an instant the young girl was wrapped in flames; she danced on for a second like a will o' the wisp in the midst of a ruddy blaze, and then, terrified, rushed to the

wings, crazed with fright and was burned alive in her blazing garments.

Paul had been deeply grieved by the accident, of which the newspapers of the day all spoke, and in which the name of the victim may be found by any one curious to know it. But his sorrow was unmixed with remorse, and he did not suppose he had in the least degree contributed to an accident which he regretted more than any one else. Now, however, he was convinced that his insistent habit of following her with his glance had had something to do with the death of the lovely girl. He looked on himself as her murderer; he felt a horror of himself and wished he had never been born.

This state of prostration was followed by a violent reaction. Paul broke into a nervous laugh, threw away Valetta's book, and exclaimed: —

"Upon my word, I am going crazy or turning into an idiot. The Naples sun must have affected my brain. What would the men at my club say if they knew that I have seriously discussed whether or not I am a jettatore?"

Paddy here knocked discreetly at the door. Paul opened, and the groom, conscientiously performing his

duties, presented to him upon the shining leather of his cap, a letter from Alicia, excusing himself the while for not having a silver salver.

D'Aspremont broke the seal and read as follows: —

"Are you annoyed with me, Paul? You did not come last night, and your lemon sherbet melted sadly away on the table. I kept looking for you until nine o'clock, trying to make out the sound of your carriage wheels amid the din of the cicalas and the rumbling of the tambourines. Then I gave up hope and quarrelled with the Commodore. Are not women wonderfully just? Pulcinella's black nose, Don Limon, and Donna Pangrazia must have a wonderful attraction for you, for I know by my secret police that you spent the evening at San Carlino. You did not write a single one of those letters you said were so important. Why do you not simply confess that you were stupidly jealous of Count d'Altavilla? I thought you had more pride, and your modesty is touching. You need have no fear; Count d'Altavilla is too handsome, and I do not care for Apollos that wear watch charms. I ought to treat you with haughty disdain, and inform you that I did not notice your absence, but the truth is that the time

hung very heavily on my hands, that I was in a very bad temper, very nervous, and that I nearly beat Vicè who was laughing as if she were crazy, though what it was at, I have not the faintest idea.

"A. W."

Paul completely recovered the feeling of real life on reading this playfully sarcastic letter. He dressed, ordered the carriage, and soon the incredulous Scazziga was cracking his whip at his horses that dashed at a gallop down the lava-paved street, through the crowd that is ever dense on the Santa Lucia quay.

"What is the matter with you, Scazziga?" asked Paul; "you will have a smash presently."

The coachman turned sharply round to reply, and Paul's angry glance fell full upon him. A stone he had not perceived forced up one of the fore wheels and the violence of the shock caused him to fall from his box, though he managed to keep hold of the reins. He clambered back as nimbly as a monkey, with a bump the size of a hen's egg on his forehead.

"The devil take me if I turn round again when you speak to me," he grumbled low. "Timberio, Falsacappa, and Gelsomina were right. He is a jettatore.

To-morrow I shall buy a pair of horns; it can do no harm and may do good."

Paul was disturbed by the incident, for it brought him back within the magic circle he was trying to escape from. Of course the fact that a stone happens to be struck by the wheel of a carriage and that the driver tumbles off his seat, is of daily occurrence, but the *effect* had followed so closely upon the *cause*, Scazziga's fall had coincided so exactly with the *look* he had cast upon him, that all his fears returned.

"I have a great mind," he said to himself, "to leave this extravagant country to-morrow, for as long as I stay in it I feel my brain rattling around in my head like a dried nut in its shell. But if I were to acquaint Alicia with my fears, she would laugh at me, and the climate of Naples is beneficial to her. But, by the way, she was in excellent health before she made my acquaintance! Never had that swan's nest, England, floating on the waves, given birth to a fairer and rosier child. Life sparkled in her glorious eyes and bloomed upon her satiny fresh cheeks; a rich clean blood coursed in the azure veins under her transparent skin, and her beauty made itself felt under her grace and strength. But once my glance fell upon

her, she grew pale, thin, and altered; her delicate hands became more slender; her brilliant eyes were circled with dark rings, and it seemed as though consumption had touched her with its bony fingers. During my absence, she quickly regained her lovely colour; her breath came freely from the lungs which the physician had sounded with anxiety. If she were freed from my fatal influence, she would live long. I believe I am killing her. The other evening, while I was there, she experienced such acute pain that her cheeks became pallid as though death had breathed upon her. I wonder whether I unknowingly cast jettatura upon her? Of course the whole thing may be explained in the most natural manner, for many English girls have a predisposition to consumption."

Paul d'Aspremont turned these thoughts over in his mind all the way. When he appeared on the terrace, where the Commodore and Alicia spent most of their time, the huge Sicilian ox-horns, given by Count d'Altavilla, outspread their jasper-like crescents in the most conspicuous place. The Commodore, observing Paul's glance fall upon them, turned blue, which was his way of blushing. Less delicately minded than his niece, he had listened to Vicè's confidences.

Alicia, with a gesture of profound disdain, signed to the servant to remove the horns, and cast upon Paul an adorable glance full of love, of courage, and of faith.

"Leave them where they are," said Paul to Vicè. "They are very handsome."

IX

PAUL'S remark upon the horns presented by Count d'Altavilla appeared to give the Commodore pleasure. Vicè smiled, exhibiting a row of teeth of which the canines, separate and sharp, shone with ferocious whiteness. Alicia's swift look asked of her friend a question that remained unanswered, and an awkward silence fell upon the company.

The first moments of a visit, even when it is cordial, familiar, and the repetition of a daily call, are usually embarrassing. During the time of absence, even though it be of a few hours' duration only, an invisible atmosphere has gathered about each one and bars confidence. It is like a perfectly clear pane of glass through which one can see the landscape but that a fly cannot traverse. There is apparently nothing the matter, yet an obstacle makes itself felt.

An unspoken thought, kept well in the background, for all three were well seasoned people of the world,

caused each member of the party to be more preoccupied than was the wont of persons usually so much at their ease. The Commodore was mechanically twiddling his thumbs; d'Aspremont could not take his eyes off the black, polished points of the horns he had forbidden Vicè to remove, studying them as though he were a naturalist seeking to classify some hitherto unknown species; Alicia was toying with the bow of the broad ribbon that she wore as a belt round her wrapper, and pretended to be refastening it.

She was the first to break the ice, with the playful freedom of English girls, who are, however, so modest and reserved once they are married.

"Really, Paul, you have not been very amiable of late. Is your love a cold-house plant which can bloom in England only, and the development of which the high temperature of this climate interferes with? You were so attentive, so thoughtful, so ready to forestall my least wishes when you were with us at our Lincolnshire place. You presented yourself with smiling lips, your heart on your sleeve, your hair irreproachably curled, and ready to bend the knee before the goddess of your soul; such, in a word, as lovers are depicted in the illustrations to novels."

"And I still love you, Alicia," replied d'Aspremont, in a voice full of feeling, but without removing his eyes from the horns hanging on one of the antique pillars that supported the vine-leaf roof.

"You say it in so lugubrious a tone," returned Alicia, "that it taxes my self-conceit to believe it. I fancy that what you liked in me was pallor, my diaphaneity, my Ossianic and vaporous grace. My state of ill-health bestowed upon me a certain romantic charm that I have now lost."

"You were never lovelier, Alicia."

"Words, words, words, as Shakespeare says. I am so lovely that you do not condescend to look at me."

As a matter of fact d'Aspremont's eyes had not once rested upon the girl.

"Well," she said, with a comically exaggerated sigh, "I see plainly that I have turned into a stout, sturdy peasant girl, blooming, high-coloured and blowzy, without a trace of breeding, and unfit to appear at Almack's or in the 'Book of Beauty,' with a sheet of tissue paper between my portrait and a sonnet."

"Miss Ward, you take pleasure in gratuitously slandering yourself," said Paul with downcast glance.

"You had better own at once that you think me horrid. It is your fault, Commodore," she went on. "You have been feeding me up on chicken wings, choice chops, fillet of beef and Canary wine, and with your rides on horseback, your sea-bathing and your gymnastic exercise, you have worked me up to a state of rude country health that has scattered to the winds Mr. d'Aspremont's poetic illusions."

"You are teasing Mr. d'Aspremont and making fun of me," said the Commodore. "It is quite certain that fillet of beef is strengthening and that Canary wine never hurt any one."

"What a disappointment it must be for you, Paul, to have parted with a nixie, an elf, a willis, and to come upon what physicians and parents call a healthy lass! But since you have not the courage to look at me, shudder with horror — I am seven ounces heavier than when I left England!"

"Eight ounces," proudly corrected the Commodore, who tended Alicia as carefully as the most tender mother could have done.

"Is it eight ounces exactly? Oh, you dreadful uncle; you want to disenchant Mr. d'Aspremont for good."

While the young girl was thus rallying him with a coquetry she would not have permitted herself to indulge in had she not had serious reasons for doing so, d'Aspremont, a prey to his fixed notion and resolved not to harm Miss Ward with his deadly glance, kept his eyes resolutely upon the talismanic horns or let his gaze wander over the vast blue horizon visible from the terrace. He asked himself whether he was not in duty bound, even at the cost of passing for a man false to his word and to the dictates of honour, to flee from Alicia and to spend the rest of his life on some desert island where at least his jettatura would die out for lack of a human glance that could absorb it.

"I see," continued Alicia, keeping up her raillery, "what is making you so sombre and so grave. Our wedding is only a month hence, and you are startled at the thought of becoming the husband of a poor country girl who has lost all trace of elegance. I willingly give you back your plighted word, and you may marry my friend Sarah Templeton, who eats pickles and drinks vinegar in order to get thin."

And she laughed with the silvery, bright laughter of youth at the notion, Paul and the Commodore joining in heartily.

When the last burst of her nervous gaiety had spent itself, she went up to d'Aspremont, took him by the hand, led him to the piano placed in the corner of the terrace, and opening a music book on the desk, said: —

"My dear Paul, you evidently do not feel up to talking to-day, and what is not worth saying is sung. You shall therefore take your part in this duettino, the accompaniment of which is not difficult; it consists chiefly of chords."

Paul sat down on the stool; Alicia stood behind him in such a way as to read the song upon the score. The Commodore leaned back, stretched out his legs, and assumed a pose of anticipated beatitude, for he claimed to be somewhat of a dilettante and affirmed that he adored music. After the sixth bar, however, he slept the sleep of the just, and insisted, in spite of his niece's sarcasms, in giving the name of ecstasy to his dozing, although he not infrequently snored, which is not a usual sign of ecstasy.

The duettino was a bright and lively air set to words by Metastasio, and in the taste of Cimarosa, which I can best liken to a butterfly flitting to and fro in a sunbeam.

Music hath power to cause the evil spirits to depart. Paul had not been playing long before he had forgotten everything about conjuring fingers, magical horns, and coral amulets. He had forgotten Valetta's terrible work and all he had read about jettatura. His soul was rising joyously, borne on the accents of Alicia's voice, into a pure and harmonious atmosphere. The cicalas were silent, as if listening, and the sea breeze, that had just risen, bore the notes away with the petals of the flowers that fell from the vases on the edge of the terrace.

"Uncle is as sound asleep as the Seven Sleepers in their grotto, and if it were not his habit, it might be painful to our self-love as artists. Shall we take a turn round the garden while he is resting? I have never yet shown you my Paradise."

So saying, Alicia took down from a nail driven into one of the pillars, on which it was hung by the long ribbons, a broad-brimmed Florentine straw hat.

In matters of horticulture Alicia held the most eccentric opinions; she would not allow flowers to be picked or the shrubbery to be trimmed. It was, as I have said, the wild, uncultivated appearance of the garden that had attracted her. So the two young

people had to make a way for themselves through the dense bushes that immediately closed in behind them. Alicia went first and laughed to see the branches of the rose laurels which she displaced lash Paul's face, but hardly had she gone twenty steps when, as if to play a botanical practical joke, a green bough caught and lifted her hat so high that Paul was unable to recover it. Fortunately the foliage was thick and the sun cast scarce a few golden sequins upon the sand through the interstices of the branches.

"This is my favourite retreat," said Alicia, showing Paul a picturesquely broken rock protected by a dense growth of orange trees, lime trees, lentisks, and myrtles.

She sat down on a part of the rock cut to the shape of a seat, and signed to Paul to kneel down in front of her upon the dry moss that carpeted the foot of the rock.

"Put both your hands in mine, and look straight into my eyes," she said. "In another month I shall be your wife. Why does your glance avoid mine?"

Paul, indeed, again a prey to his thoughts of jettatura, had looked away.

"Are you afraid of reading in it any rebellious or guilty thought? You know my heart has been yours since the day you brought the letter of introduction to

my uncle in our drawing-room at Richmond. I am one of those Englishwomen who are tender, romantic, and proud, and who love in a moment with a lifelong love, a love more than lifelong, it may be, and she who can love can die too. Look straight into my eyes; I insist upon it; do not try to look down, or I shall be compelled to believe that a gentleman who ought to fear God alone allows himself to be frightened by wretched superstitions. Fix on me your eyes, which you fancy so dangerous and which are so sweet to me, for I read your love in them. Then tell me if you still think me pretty enough to drive with me, when we are married, in an open carriage in Hyde Park."

Paul, bewildered, looked long at Alicia with a glance filled with love and enthusiasm. Suddenly the girl turned deadly pale; a sharp pain shot through her heart like an arrow; something seemed to give way in her breast, and she put her handkerchief quickly to her lips. A red drop stained the fine cambric, which Alicia swiftly concealed.

"I thank you, Paul. You have made me very happy, for I believed you had ceased to love me."

X

ALICIA'S gesture, as she strove to hide her handkerchief, had not, quick as it had been, escaped d'Aspremont's notice. He turned pale in his turn, for this was an unmistakable proof of his fatal power. His brain was filled with the most sinister thoughts, and for a second suicide occurred to him. Was it not, indeed, his duty to destroy himself as being a maleficent creature, and thus to remove the involuntary cause of so many misfortunes? He would willingly have endured the hardest trials and borne courageously the burden of life; but the thought of dealing death to the woman he loved best was horrible beyond expression.

The heroic girl had mastered the feeling of pain, the consequence of Paul's glance, and which coincided so strangely with the warning given her by Count d'Altavilla. A less strong-minded person might have been struck by the result, which, if not supernatural, was at least difficult of explanation; but, as I have said, Alicia was religious and not superstitious. Her faith,

unshakable in matters of belief, rejected as old women's tales every story of mysterious influences, and she laughed at the most deeply rooted popular beliefs. Besides, even had she admitted the existence of jettatura, and had she recognised in Paul its evident signs, she was too tender-hearted and too proud to hesitate for a moment. Paul had done nothing to which the most delicate susceptibility could take exception, and Miss Ward would rather have fallen dead under his so-called fatal glance than have rejected a love she had accepted with her uncle's consent and which marriage was soon to crown. She resembled somewhat the chastely bold, virginly resolute heroines of Shakespeare, whose sudden love is none the less pure and true, and who unhesitatingly bind themselves for life. Her hand had pressed Paul's and no other man on earth was henceforth to hold it in his. She looked upon her life as linked to his, and her maidenly modesty would have revolted at the mere thought of any other hymen.

She therefore exhibited genuine happiness, or at least so admirably simulated it that the keenest observer would have been deceived, and raising Paul, still kneeling at her feet, she led him through the flower-tangled

and shrub-obstructed walks of her wild garden to a spot where the vegetation, less dense, allowed the sea to show like an azure dream of the infinite. The luminous serenity dispelled Paul's dark thoughts. Alicia leaned upon his arm as if they were already man and wife, and in this mute and pure caress, meaningless in any other woman but decisive in her case, she gave herself to him more formally still, reassured him, and gave him to understand how little she feared the dangers with which she was said to be threatened. Although she had at once imposed silence on Vicè, and then on her uncle, and although Count d'Altavilla had refused to name any one, she had quickly understood that it was Paul d'Aspremont who was meant, for the mysterious remarks plainly pointed to him. She had also noticed that Paul himself, sharing the prejudice so widespread in Naples that turns into a jettatore any man whose face is somewhat out of the common, had come, through incredible weakness on his part, to believe himself a victim of the fascino, and that he deliberately avoided looking at her in order not to hurt her by his glance. It was in order to react against this incipient mania that she had brought about the scene I have just described, but which had a result very differ-

ent from that she had intended, since it confirmed, even more than before, Paul's sad conviction.

They returned to the terrace, where the Commodore, still under the influence of the music, was melodiously sleeping in his rattan arm-chair. Paul took leave, and Alicia, imitating the Neapolitan gesture of farewell, blew a kiss to him on her finger tips, and said, in a voice full of suave caresses, "Good-bye till to-morrow, Paul. You will be sure to come, will you not?"

The Commodore, aroused by Paul's departure, was struck by Alicia's radiant, alarming, almost supernatural beauty. The whites of her eyes had a burnished silver tone in which flashed her pupils like luminous black stars; her cheeks were ideally rosy, and of a purity and warmth no painter ever knew; her temples, transparent as agates, were veined with a network of delicate blue lines, while her flesh seemed to be interpenetrated by sunbeams, so that her soul appeared to be breaking out of her.

"How beautiful you are to-day, Alicia," said the Commodore.

"You flatter me, uncle. It is not your fault if I am not the most conceited girl in the United King-

dom. Happily I do not believe flatterers, even when disinterested."

"Beautiful, dangerously beautiful," went on the Commodore, speaking to himself. "She is the living image of her poor mother, Nancy, who died at nineteen. Angels like them cannot remain on earth. A mere breath blows them away, and invisible wings seem to grow on their shoulders. They are too fair, too pure, too perfect; they lack the red, coarse blood of life, and God, who lends them to this earth for a few days, hastens to recall them to Himself. Her supreme brilliancy of beauty saddens me as though it were a farewell."

"Well, uncle," said Miss Ward, who noted the darkening of her uncle's brow; "if I am so pretty, it is time I were married. The veil and orange wreath will become me."

"Marry! Are you in such a hurry to leave your old uncle?"

"I shall not leave you, for it is agreed with Mr. d'Aspremont that we are to live all together. You know very well that I cannot do without you."

"Mr. d'Aspremont is all very well, but he is not your husband yet."

"Your word and mine are both pledged to him, and you have never broken yours."

"He has my pledged word, there is no doubt of that," replied the Commodore, somewhat embarrassed.

"And is it not some days since the six months' delay you wished for came to an end?" said Alicia, whose rosy cheeks became rosier yet.

"So you have been counting the months, my girl. Well, there is no trusting you demure ones."

"I love Mr. d'Aspremont," replied Alicia, gravely.

"There's the rub," jerked out Sir Joshua Ward, who, filled with the notions put into his head by Vicè and Count d'Altavilla, did not at all care to have a jettatore for a son-in-law.

"I have but one heart," returned Alicia, "and but one love, even if, like my mother, I were to die at nineteen."

"Die!" exclaimed the Commodore; "pray do not utter such a horrible thing."

"Have you anything to urge against Mr. d'Aspremont?"

"Nothing whatever."

"Has he shown himself dishonourable in any way? Has he once proved cowardly, vile, untruthful, or

perfidious? Has he ever insulted a woman or backed down before a man? Is there any secret stain upon his crest? Would a girl, entering society as his wife, have to blush for him or cast her eyes down?"

"Mr. Paul d'Aspremont is a perfect gentleman, and absolutely respectable."

"You may be sure, uncle, that, if he were not, I should at once give him up, and bury myself in some inaccessible retreat; but I shall not break my plighted word for any other reason. You understand me?" said Miss Ward, gently but firmly.

The Commodore was twiddling his thumbs, his usual recourse when bothered.

"Why are you so cool towards Paul nowadays?" went on Miss Ward. "You used to be so fond of him; you could not do without him when we were in Lincolnshire; and when you shook hands with him, and crushed his fingers in doing so, you said he was a fine fellow, to whom you would not hesitate to confide a girl's happiness."

"Yes, indeed, I was very fond of him," said the Commodore, moved by the remembrances called up by his niece. "But what is not so plain when shrouded

in English fogs, is plain enough in the Neapolitan sunshine."

"What do you mean?" asked Alicia, whose bright colour suddenly faded away and who turned as white as an alabaster statue upon a tombstone, while her voice trembled.

"I mean that Paul is a jettatore."

"What, uncle! you, Sir Joshua Ward, a Christian gentleman and a subject of Her Majesty; you, a retired naval officer, and an enlightened and civilised man, so often consulted on so many matters; you who have education and wisdom, and who daily read your Bible, you do not hesitate to accuse Paul of jettatura? Oh! I did not expect that from you."

"I may be all you say, my dear Alicia," replied the Commodore, "when your happiness is not at stake, but when a danger, even if imaginary only, threatens you, I become more superstitious than a peasant of the Abruzzi, a lazzaroni on the Mole, a Chiaja ostricajo, a maid servant of Terra di Lavoro, or even a Neapolitan Count. Paul may glare at me as much as he likes with his cross look; I shall remain as cool as in front of a rapier point or a pistol barrel. Fascino can have no hold on me, who have been burned, tanned,

and baked by every sun. It is only where you are concerned, my dear, that I am credulous, and I confess that I feel a cold sweat all over me when that unfortunate fellow's glance rests upon you. I know very well that he has no evil intentions and that he loves you better than his own life, but it seems to me that when he does look at you your features change, your colour goes, and you strive to hide keen pain. Then I do feel like tearing out his eyes with the Count's horns."

"Poor dear uncle," said Alicia, moved by the Commodore's warmth. "Our lives are in God's hands. Not a prince dies on his state bed, not a sparrow under the slates, unless the appointed time has come. Fascino has nothing to do with it, and it is wicked to suppose that a more or less oblique glance can have any influence upon our fate. Come, nunky," continued she, using the term of familiar endearment of the jester in "King Lear," "you were not serious in what you said just now. Your love for me biassed your judgment, usually so sound. I am sure you would never dare to say to Paul that you cannot now give him your niece's hand and that you do not want him to marry into your family because he is a jettatore."

"By Joshua, my namesake, who stopped the sun, I

shall not hesitate to speak my mind to your handsome Paul," cried the Commodore. "What do I care whether I am ridiculous and absurd, or whether I break my word even, when it is a question of your health? I pledged my word to a man, not to a jettatore. I have promised, it is true, and I shall simply not keep my promise. If he is not satisfied, I am ready to give him satisfaction."

And the exasperated Commodore lunged out without thinking of the gout that tortured him.

"Sir Joshua Ward, you will not do so," said Alicia, with calm dignity.

The Commodore fell back in his arm-chair quite out of breath, and remained silent.

"Granting that the shameful and stupid charge were true, uncle, is it a reason for dismissing Mr. d'Aspremont and turning his misfortune into a crime? You acknowledge yourself that the harm he may do is done unconsciously, and that no man was ever more loving, generous, and noble."

"One does not marry a vampire, however good his intentions may be," replied the Commodore.

"But that is all nonsense and extravagant superstition. The one bit of truth in the whole business is

that Paul has taken it seriously, and is terrified and under the spell of a hallucination. He has come to believe in his fatal power, is afraid of himself, for every slight accident, unnoticed by him formerly, confirms his belief, for he now fancies it is caused by him. Is it not my part, since I am his wife before God and soon shall be so before men, with your blessing, uncle dear, is it not my part, I say, to calm his over excited imagination, to drive away these vain shadows, to dispel, by apparent and real trustfulness, his haggard anxiety, twin sister of monomania, and to save, by making him happy, his troubled soul and his imperilled mind?"

"You are right, as usual, Alicia," answered the Commodore, "and I am only an old fool. I do believe Vicè is a witch, who has upset me with her stories. As for Count d'Altavilla, he strikes me at present, with his horns and his cabalistic gimcracks, as being very ridiculous. No doubt it was a trick to get Paul out of the way so that he might get you himself."

"It is possible that Count d'Altavilla has acted in good faith," said Miss Ward, smiling. "But now you were of his opinion."

"Do not hit a man when he is down, my dear. Besides I might fall away again, for I have not quite

got rid of my erroneous ideas. The best thing we can do is to leave Naples by the next steamer, and go quietly back to England. When Paul ceases to see around him bulls' horns, stags' heads, pointed fingers, coral amulets, and all the rest of these diabolical inventions, he will grow calmer, and I also shall forget the nonsense which nearly led me to break my word and to act as no gentleman should act. You shall marry Paul, since you have agreed to do so; you shall keep for me the sitting-room and bedroom on the ground-floor of our Richmond home, and the octagonal tower in our Lincolnshire castle, and we shall live happily together. If your health requires that you should go to a milder climate, we shall rent a country house near Tours, or else at Cannes, where Lord Brougham has a fine property, and where these damnable jettatura superstitions are unknown, thank God! What say you to that, Alicia?"

"You do not need my approval; am I not the most obedient of nieces?"

"Yes, when you have your own way, you minx," said the Commodore with a smile as he retired to his own room.

Alicia remained a few moments longer on the terrace, but, whether the scene she had gone through had induced feverishness in her, or whether Paul really exercised over the young girl an influence such as the Commodore dreaded, she shivered with cold as the warm evening breeze blew upon her gauze-covered shoulders, and that night, feeling unwell, she begged Vicè to spread over her feet, cold and white as marble, one of those Harlequin rugs that are manufactured in Venice.

Meanwhile the glow-worms sparkled in the grass, the cicalas were chirping, and the great golden moon rose in the heavens out of a haze of heat.

XI

THE next day, Alicia, who had had a bad night, scarcely touched the drink brought her by Vicè as was her daily habit, and she placed it languidly upon the table at her bedhead. She did not suffer from any pain in particular; it was rather that she felt worn out, that she found it difficult to live; and she would have experienced some difficulty in stating the symptoms of her trouble to a physician.

She ordered Vicè to bring her a mirror, for girls are more concerned with the change in their looks due to suffering than with suffering itself. She was extremely pale; two little spots only, like two rose leaves fallen upon a cup of milk, showed on her pallid cheeks. Her eyes shone with unaccustomed brilliancy, filled with the last flashes of fever, but her cherry lips had paled and, in order to restore their brightness, she bit them with her pearly teeth.

She rose, put on a white cashmere wrapper, twisted a gauze scarf around her head, for, in spite of the heat

that kept the cicalas chirping, she felt shivery, and went out on the terrace at her accustomed time in order to avoid awaking the ever watchful solicitude of the Commodore. She barely tasted her breakfast, though she forced herself to do so, as the least symptom of illness would have been attributed by the Commodore to Paul's influence, and this Alicia desired above all things to avoid. Then, under pretext that the blinding light of day tired her, she withdrew to her room, after having several times repeated to her uncle, who was very suspicious in such matters, that she was particularly well that morning.

"Particularly well," said the Commodore to himself when she had gone; "I am not so sure of that. She had pearly tones round the eyes and a bright colour on her cheeks, exactly like her poor mother, who also used to insist that she had never felt better. What had I best do? If I were to make her break off her engagement to Paul, I should be merely killing her in another way. Best leave Nature to herself; Alicia is young yet. True, but it is the young that old Mob attacks; it is as jealous as a woman. I might send for a physician; but what can medicine do for an angel? Yet all the bad symptoms had disappeared. Ah! if it be

indeed you, you cursed Paul, whose breath is withering that heavenly flower, I will strangle you with my own hands. But Nancy did not suffer from a jettatore's glance, and yet she died. Suppose Alicia were to die! No, no; it is impossible. What have I done that God should inflict such pain upon me? Long ere she dies I shall be under the sod, in the shadow of the church in my native place, with *Sacred to the Memory of Sir Joshua Ward* upon my tombstone. And Alicia will come and weep upon the gray stone over the old Commodore. I do not know what is the matter with me this morning; I am as low-spirited and dull as it is possible to be."

By way of dispelling these dark thoughts, the Commodore added a little Jamaica rum to his cup of tea, now grown cold, and called for his hookah, an innocent indulgence he allowed himself only when Alicia was absent, for her sensitiveness might have suffered even from that light-scented smoke.

He had already got the perfumed water bubbling and had puffed a few bluish wreaths of smoke, when Vicè appeared and announced Count d'Altavilla.

"Sir Joshua," said the Count, after the exchange of the ordinary civilities, "have you thought over the

request I had the honour of making of you the other day?"

"I have thought it over," replied the Commodore, "but, as you are aware, I am pledged to Mr. Paul d'Aspremont."

"I am aware of the fact. Yet there are cases in which a pledge may be withdrawn. For instance, when the person to whom it has been made turns out to be different from what he was believed to be."

"Speak more plainly, Count."

"I dislike speaking ill of a rival, but after the conversation we had, you cannot help understanding me. If you were to refuse Mr. Paul d'Aspremont's suit, would you allow me to come forward?"

"For my own part I can answer in the affirmative, but it is not quite as sure that Miss Ward would approve of the change. She is very much in love with Paul, and it is somewhat my fault, for I favoured his suit myself before hearing all this nonsense. Pray forgive me, Count, for putting it in that way, but I am all upset."

"Do you want your niece to die?" said Count d'Altavilla, in a tone of deep emotion.

"Blood and thunder! My niece die!" exclaimed

the Commodore, springing from his arm-chair and dropping the morocco tube of his hookah, for he was very sensitive on this point. "Is she dangerously ill?"

"Do not be so easily alarmed, sir. Miss Ward may live a long time yet."

"I am glad to hear that; you terrified me."

"On one condition, however," continued Count d'Altavilla, — "that she shall cease to see Mr. Paul d'Aspremont."

"The jettatura again! Unfortunately, Miss Ward does not believe in it."

"Listen to me," said the Count quietly. "The first time I met Miss Alicia at the Prince of Syracuse's ball, and began to love her with a love as respectful as it was deep, I was struck at once by the brilliant health, the joy of life, and the bloom of strength which radiated from her. Her beauty was positively luminous and seemed to float in an atmosphere of well-being. She shone in that phosphorescence like a star; Englishwomen, Russians, and Italians paled by her side. I could look at no one but her. To her English high-breeding she united the clean, strong grace of the goddesses of antiquity. Forgive my indulging in mythology, but I am descended from one of the Greek colonies."

"She was indeed splendid. Miss Edwina O'Hara, Lady Eleanor Lilly, Mrs. Jane Strangford, and Princess Vera Federeovna Bariatinski turned yellow with envy," returned the delighted Commodore.

"And now do you not notice that her beauty has become somewhat languid, that her features have acquired a morbid delicacy, that the veins on her hands show bluer than they should, and that the sound of her voice has a troubled vibration and a painful charm? The earthly in her is vanishing and making way for the angelic. She is attaining an ethereal perfection that, at the cost of your thinking me too materialistic, I must own I do not care to see in the daughters of our earth."

The Count's words corresponded so accurately with the secret preoccupation of Sir Joshua Ward that the latter remained for some moments silent and apparently sunk in deep thought.

"I have not yet done," went on the Count. "Had Miss Ward's health caused you any anxiety previous to the arrival of Mr. d'Aspremont in England?"

"Never once. She was the brightest and most blooming girl in the kingdom."

"You see, then, that Mr. d'Aspremont's presence

coincides with the periods of ill-health that are undermining Miss Ward's life. I do not ask you, a Northerner, to credit implicitly a belief, a prejudice, a superstition, if you please, that prevails throughout our Southern lands, but you must confess that the facts are startling and deserve attention."

"May there not be a natural cause in her case?" said the Commodore, shaken by the Count's specious reasoning, but held back by his English conservatism from adopting the popular belief.

"Miss Ward is not ill; she is poisoned, as it were, by Mr. d'Aspremont's glance. If he is not a jettatore, he is at the least maleficent."

"But what can I do? She is in love with him, laughs at jettatura, and pretends that one cannot refuse an honourable man for such a reason."

"I have no right to interfere on behalf of your niece. I am neither her brother, her relative, nor her betrothed; but if I could get your consent, there is one thing I might try in order to withdraw her from that fatal influence. Do not be afraid; I shall not commit any extravagance. Young though I am, I am well aware that a woman must not be talked about. Permit me only not to reveal my plan to you and

believe me when I say that it does not involve anything that the most punctiliously honourable man might not confess openly."

"You are very much in love with my niece, are you not?" said the Commodore.

"I am, and my love is hopeless. But do you grant me leave to act?"

"You are a terrible fellow, Count d'Altavilla. Well, try to save Alicia in your own way; not only do I not object, I approve."

The Count rose, bowed, got into his carriage, and ordered the coachman to drive to the Hôtel de Rome.

Paul was leaning on the table, his head in his hands, plunged in the most painful reflections. He had caught sight of the two or three drops of blood on Alicia's handkerchief, and still under the spell of his conviction, he blamed himself for his deadly love and reproached himself for accepting the devotion of the lovely girl who was ready to die for him; and he was wondering what superhuman sacrifice he could accomplish that would repay such sublime unselfishness.

His groom Paddy interrupted his meditations as he brought in Count d'Altavilla's card.

"Count d'Altavilla! What can he possibly want with me?" said Paul, greatly surprised. "Show him in."

When the Neapolitan gentleman appeared at the door, d'Aspremont had already masked his astonishment with the look of cold indifference under which men of the world conceal their feelings.

"Sir," began the Count, while toying with the charms on his watch chain, "what I am about to say to you is so strange, so improper, so out of place, that you would be justified in throwing me out of the window. Spare yourself so brutal a proceeding, for I am ready to give you satisfaction as a gentleman."

"I am listening, sir; reserving to myself the right of availing myself of your offer later, in the event of your remarks proving unpleasant to me," replied Paul, steadfastly.

"You are a jettatore."

At these words d'Aspremont's face suddenly turned ashy green, and a red ring formed around his eyes; he bent his brows, the wrinkle in his forehead deepened, and a sulphurous light flashed from his eyes. He half rose, scoring with his nails the mahogany arms of his chair. It was so terrible that d'Alta-

villa, brave though he was, seized one of the tiny forked branches of coral hanging on his watch chain, and instinctively directed the points of it towards Paul.

By a supreme effort of the will, d'Aspremont sat down again and said: —

"You were right, sir; I ought to throw you out of the window for your insult, but I shall have the patience to await another form of reparation."

"Believe me," went on the Count, "when I say that I should not offer such an insult, which blood alone can wash out, to a gentleman were I not impelled to it by the gravest of motives."

"What is that to me?"

"It matters little to you, as you say, for you are fortunate in your love, but I, Don Felipe d'Altavilla, I forbid you to see Miss Alicia Ward again."

"I take no orders from you."

"I know that," answered the Neapolitan Count, "and I do not, therefore, expect that you will obey me."

"Then what is your reason for acting as you are doing?"

"I am convinced that the fascination with which

you are unfortunately endowed acts fatally upon Miss Alicia Ward. It is an absurd notion, a prejudice worthy of the Middle Ages, which no doubt strikes you as profoundly ridiculous. I do not propose to discuss that side of the question with you. Your eyes when turned upon Miss Ward cast upon her, in spite of yourself, a fatal glance which will be her death. I have no other means of preventing that sad result than picking an apparently causeless quarrel with you. In the sixteenth century I should have had you killed by one of my highland peasants, but that sort of thing is not good form nowadays. I did think of begging you to return to France, but it was too absurd. You would have laughed at a rival, who, under pretext of jettatura, requested you to depart and to leave him alone with your future bride."

While the Count was speaking, Paul d'Aspremont felt himself a prey to a secret horror. He, a Christian, was then really the plaything of the powers of Hell, and the Evil One in person looked out of his eyes! Catastrophes followed in his train, and his love was deadly! For a moment his reason tottered on its throne, and madness fluttered in his brain.

"On your honour, Count, do you believe what you have just said to me?" he exclaimed after a few minutes' reflection during which the Neapolitan spoke no word.

"On my honour, I do believe it."

"Then it is true," murmured Paul, "and I am a murderer, a fiend, a vampire. I am killing that heavenly girl and driving that old man to despair."

He was on the point of promising the Count not again to see Alicia, but human respect and jealousy awaking in his heart kept back the words he was about to utter.

"I will not conceal from you, Count, that I am even now going to call on Miss Ward."

"I shall not take you by the scruff of the neck to prevent your doing so. You refrained from assaulting me a moment since, and I am grateful to you for that, but I shall be delighted to see you to-morrow, at six o'clock, in the ruins of Pompeii, let us say in the Thermæ; it is a very suitable spot. What weapons do you prefer? You have the choice, as it is I who have insulted you. Shall it be rapiers, swords, or pistols?"

"We shall fight with knives, blindfolded, and sepa-

rated by the length of a handkerchief of which we shall each hold one end. We must even up the chances; I am a jettatore, and I should only have to look at you to kill you, Count."

And Paul laughed stridently, threw open a door, and disappeared.

XII

ALICIA had settled herself in a low room in the house, the walls of which were decorated with the landscapes in fresco, that, in Italy, take the place of wall-papers. The floor was covered with Manila matting. A table, on which was thrown a Turkish cloth, whereon lay volumes of verse, Coleridge, Shelley, Tennyson, and Longfellow, a mirror in an antique frame, and a few cane chairs formed the furniture. Blinds of China reeds, adorned with pagodas, rocks, willows, storks, and dragons, fitted to the openings and half drawn up, allowed a soft light to filter in. The branch of an orange tree, laden with flowers that the swelling fruit caused to fall, entered the room familiarly and spread like a garland above Alicia's head, scattering upon her its perfumed blooms.

The young girl, somewhat unwell, was lying upon a narrow sofa by the window, supported by two or three morocco cushions and her feet wrapped up in the Venetian rug. The book she had been reading had

slipped from her hands; her eyes, under their long lashes, had a far-away look and seemed to be gazing into the world beyond. She was experiencing that almost voluptuous weariness that follows upon an attack of fever, and she was busy chewing the orange blossoms she picked up on her coverlet and of which she enjoyed the bitter savour. Schiavone has painted a Venus chewing roses, and a modern artist might have made a companion piece to the old Venetian master's painting by representing Alicia biting away at the orange blossoms.

She was thinking of Paul d'Aspremont, and wondering whether she would really live long enough to become his wife; not that she believed in the influence of jettatura, but that she was, in spite of herself, a prey to the gloomiest presentiments. That very night she had had a dream the impression of which had not been dispelled by her waking.

In that dream she had seen herself lying down, but awake, and looking at the door of the room with the feeling that *some one* was about to enter. After a few moments of anxious waiting, she had perceived against the dark background of the door a slender white form, which, transparent at first, and allowing the various

objects to be seen through it as through a faint mist, had acquired greater consistency as it approached her.

The shade wore a muslin dress the long folds of which dragged on the ground; long black curls, half undone, hung mournfully down either side of her face, on the cheek-bones of which showed two bright red spots. The bosom and neck were so white that they could scarcely be distinguished from the dress, and it was impossible to say where the skin ended and where the stuff began. A very fine Venetian necklace circled the slender neck with its golden line, and in the delicate, blue-veined hand she held a tea-rose, the petals of which were falling to the ground like tears.

Alicia had never known her mother, who had died a year after giving birth to her, but she often gazed long at a faded miniature, the ivory tone and the almost vanished colouring of which, wan as the resemblance of the dead, made one think of the portrait of a shadow rather than of that of a living woman, and she understood that the woman who had entered the room was her mother, Nancy Ward. The white dress, the Venetian necklace, the flower in the hand, the black hair, the cheeks with their red spots, — nothing was lacking.

It was indeed the original of the miniature, taller and larger, moving in the reality of a dream.

Love and terror made Alicia's heart beat fast. She tried to hold her arms out to the shade, but they were heavy as lead and she could not raise them from the couch on which she lay. She strove to speak, but could only utter confused sounds.

Nancy, having placed the tea-rose upon the table, knelt by the bed and laid her cheek against Alicia's breast, listening to the working of the lungs and noting the beating of the heart. The shade's cold cheek felt like ice to the young girl, terrified by the silent auscultation.

The apparition rose, cast a sorrowful glance upon the maiden, and counting the petals of the rose, some of which had fallen since she had placed it on the table, said, "There is but one left." Then sleep had interposed its dark gauze between the sleeper and the shade, and night had swallowed up everything.

Had her mother's soul come to warn her and to fetch her? What was the meaning of the mysterious words that had dropped from the shadowy lips, — "There is but one left"? Was the fading rose with

the falling petals a symbol of her own life? The strange dream, with its graceful terrors and its awesome charm, the lovely spectre draped in muslin and counting the petals of the flower had taken fast hold of the girl's imagination. A shadow of melancholy brooded upon her lovely brow, and the sombre wings of dread presentiments swept across her face.

Had not the orange branch that shook its blooms down upon her also a funereal meaning? Were the little virginal stars not to open under her bridal veil? Sorrowful and preoccupied, Alicia withdrew from her lips the bloom she was biting; the bloom was already yellowed and faded!

It was nearly the hour when Paul d'Aspremont would call. Alicia pulled herself together, smoothed her face, curled her ringlets, arranged the folds of her somewhat rumpled gauze scarf, and picked up her book to give herself the air of being occupied.

Paul entered and Miss Ward welcomed him with a playful glance, for she did not wish him to feel any alarm at seeing her lying down, as he would infallibly have believed himself to have caused her illness. The scene with Count d'Altavilla had left on Paul's face a look of irritation and fierceness

which led Vicè to make the sign of protection, but Alicia's loving smile speedily dispelled the cloud on her lover's face.

"You are not seriously ill, I trust," he said as he sat down by her.

"It is nothing; I am a little over tired; the African sirocco that was blowing yesterday wore me out, but you shall see how well I shall be when we get back to Lincolnshire. Now that I am strong again, we shall take turns in rowing upon the lake."

But even as she spoke, she could not keep back a fit of coughing. D'Aspremont turned pale and looked away, and for a few moments silence reigned in the room.

"I have never given you anything, Paul," went on Alicia, removing from her wasted finger a plain gold ring. "Take this ring and wear it in remembrance of me. I dare say it will go on your finger, for your hand is almost as small as a woman's. And now, good-bye; I feel tired and I should like to try to sleep. Be sure to come to see me to-morrow."

Paul went away broken-hearted. Alicia had in vain tried to conceal her sufferings; he loved her madly, and he was killing her. The very ring she had just given

him, was it not the symbol of their betrothal in another life ?

He wandered along the beach, nearly out of his senses, planning flight, bethinking himself of entering a Trappist monastery and awaiting death seated on a coffin without ever raising the cowl of his frock. He called himself a coward and an ingrate for not having the strength to sacrifice his love, and taking a mean advantage of Alicia's love; for it was plain that she knew everything, that he was a jettatore, as Count d'Altavilla had said; yet, full of angelic pity, she would not repel him.

"Yes," he said to himself, "that handsome Neapolitan, that Count whom she disdains, is really in love. His love shames mine, since, in order to save Alicia, he did not fear to attack and challenge me, a jettatore, that is, as he sees it, a being as much to be dreaded as the fiend himself. While he spoke to me, he was toying with his amulets, and the glance of that famous duellist who has slain three men fell before mine."

On his return to the Hôtel de Rome, Paul wrote a few letters, drew up a will in which he left all he possessed, save a legacy to Paddy, to Miss Ward, and

took the various precautions which a gentleman takes when about to engage in a duel to the death.

He opened the rose-wood cases in which he kept his weapons in compartments lined with green serge, turned over the rapiers, the pistols, and the hunting-knives, and at last came upon a couple of Corsican stilettoes, absolutely identical, which he had purchased with the intention of giving them to his friends. The blades were of pure steel, stout near the hilt, and double edged towards the point, damascened, curiously terrible, and carefully mounted. He also selected three silk handkerchiefs and made a bundle of the lot. Then he sent word to Scazziga to be ready very early in the morning for an excursion into the country.

"May the duel prove fatal to me," said he as he threw himself on the bed. "If I am only lucky enough to be killed, Alicia will live."

XIII

POMPEII, the dead city, does not awake in the morning like living cities, and although it has partially thrown back the covering of ashes that has lain over it for so many centuries, it remains asleep on its funereal couch even when the night has passed away.

At that time the tourists of all nations who visit it during the day are still in their beds, worn out by their fatiguing excursions, and dawn, as it lights up the ruins of the mummy-city, does not behold a single human face. The lizards alone, with quivering tails, crawl along the walls, skurry across the disjointed mosaics, heedless of the *Cave canem* inscribed on the threshold of the deserted houses, and joyously hail the first beams of the rising sun. They are the dwellers who have taken the places of the former inhabitants, and it seems as though Pompeii had been exhumed for their special benefit.

Strange indeed is it to see in the rose and azure light of morn the dead city that was surprised in the

midst of its pleasures, of its work and its civilisation, and which has not undergone the slow decay of ordinary ruins. One cannot help thinking that the owners of the houses, preserved in their smallest parts, are about to issue forth clad in their Roman or Greek dresses; that the cars will presently be tearing along the ruts in the pavement made by them of old; that the topers will in a moment enter the taverns on the counters of which the stains made by the drinking cups are still visible. One walks as in a dream amid the scenes of the past; on the street corners may be seen the red letter posters advertising the shows of the day — only, the day has passed away more than seventeen centuries ago. In the early light of morn, the dancing girls painted on the walls seem to be clinking their crotalæ, and with the tip of their white feet to raise the rosy, foam-like edge of their draperies, believing no doubt that the lamps are being relighted for the orgies in the triclinium. The Venuses and the satyrs, heroic or grotesque figures, animated by a sunbeam, attempt to take the place of the vanished inhabitants and to provide the dead city with a painted population. The coloured shadows tremble along the walls, and the mind may, for a

few minutes, indulge in the fancy of an evocation of antiquity.

On that day, however, to the great dismay of the lizards, the matutinal serenity of Pompeii was broken by a strange visitor. A carriage drew up at the entrance to the Street of Tombs; Paul alighted, and walked on foot to the meeting-place.

He was early, and though he must have been thinking of anything but archæology, he could not help noticing, as he went along, innumerable little details he probably would not have observed had he been in his usual frame of mind. When the brain relaxes its vigilance over the senses, these, acting for themselves, acquire occasionally singular lucidity. A man condemned to death and on his way to the scaffold, will mark a little flower blooming between the cracks of the pavement, the number on the button of a soldier's uniform, a misspelt word on a sign, and many another trifling circumstance which becomes suddenly of enormous importance.

D'Aspremont passed by the Villa of Diomedes, Mamia's tomb, the funeral hemicycles, the antique gate of the city, the houses and the shops that line the Consular Way, almost without glancing at them,

yet the coloured and brilliant images of these monuments reached his brain with wonderful clearness. He saw everything: the fluted pillars overlaid half-way up with red or yellow stucco, the fresco paintings, and the inscriptions traced on the walls. An advertisement of a house to rent had even engraved itself so deeply in his mind that he mechanically kept on repeating the Latin words without attaching any meaning to them.

Was it the thought of the approaching duel that thus absorbed Paul? By no means. He did not even dwell upon it; his mind was elsewhere — in the drawing-room at Richmond. He was presenting to the Commodore his letter of introduction, and Alicia was watching him. She had on a white dress and jasmine blossoms in her hair. How lovely, young, and strong she was then!

The old baths are at the end of the Consular Way, near the Street of Fortune, so that d'Aspremont had no difficulty in finding them. He entered the vaulted hall surrounded by a series of niches formed by terra-cotta Atlases, that upbear an architrave ornamented with foliage and figures of children. The marble overlaying, the mosaics, and the bronze tripods have dis-

appeared. Of the former splendour nothing is left save the terra-cotta Atlases and the walls, bare as those of a tomb. A faint light, filtering through a little round window in which shows a disk of blue sky, shimmers on the broken slabs of the pavement.

Here it was that the women of Pompeii were wont to come, after the bath, to dry their lovely wet bodies, to dress their hair, to resume their tunics, and to smile at their own beauty in the burnished brass of the mirrors. A very different scene was about to take place there, and blood was about to flow on the ground formerly drenched with perfumes.

Presently Count d'Altavilla appeared, carrying a case of pistols in his hand and a couple of swords under his arm, for he had taken it for granted that d'Aspremont had not made his proposal seriously. He had merely looked upon it as a piece of Mephistophelian raillery, of infernal sarcasm.

"What do we want with those pistols and swords, Count?" said Paul when he perceived him. "Did we not agree upon another mode of fighting?"

"Certainly, but it occurred to me that you might change your mind. No one ever fought a duel in that way."

"Even were we equally skilful, my position gives me too great an advantage over you," answered Paul, with a bitter smile. "I do not propose to avail myself of it. Here are stilettoes that I have brought with me. Examine them; they are absolutely alike. Here are handkerchiefs with which to blindfold ourselves; they are thick, as you see, and *my glance* cannot pierce through them."

Count d'Altavilla bowed in acquiescence.

"We have no seconds," went on Paul, "and one of us must not emerge alive from this vault. Let us, therefore, each write a note certifying that the fight was a fair one, and the victor shall place it on the breast of the dead."

"A good idea," replied the Count, with a smile, as he wrote a few lines on a leaf torn from Paul's pocket-book.

Paul did the same.

Then the two adversaries threw off their coats, blindfolded themselves, seized their stilettoes, and took hold each of one end of the handkerchief, the link between their respective hatreds.

"Are you ready?" asked d'Aspremont of Count d'Altavilla.

"Yes," replied the Neapolitan, in a perfectly cool voice.

Don Felipe d'Altavilla was a man of tried courage, who feared nothing on earth save jettatura, and this duel in the dark, that would have caused any other man to tremble with terror, did not in the least trouble him. He was simply staking his life on the issue, and he was saved the unpleasantness of seeing his opponent glare at him with his yellow eyes.

The two combatants brandished their knives, and the handkerchief which linked them in the thick darkness drew taut. Paul and the Count had instinctively thrown themselves back, that being the only parry possible in so strange a duel, and their arms fell back after a useless stab in the empty air.

This obscure struggle, in which each one felt death without being able to see it approach, was horrible. Grim and silent the two adversaries retreated, twisted around, sprang aside, struck against each other at times, missing their stroke, or sending it too far. There was no sound but that of the trampling of their feet and the panting of their breasts. Once d'Altavilla felt the point of his stiletto strike something. He stopped, thinking he had slain his rival, and listened

for the fall of the body; but it was the wall he had struck.

"By Jove!" he said, as he fell on guard again. "I made sure I had run you through."

"Do not speak," answered Paul; "your voice guides me."

And the duel went on as before.

Suddenly the two opponents felt the taut handkerchief fall. A stroke of Paul's stiletto had severed it.

"A truce," cried the Neapolitan. "We are loose; the handkerchief is cut."

"No matter; let us go on," replied Paul.

A dead silence fell upon the scene. Like loyal adversaries that they were, neither d'Aspremont nor the Count wished to take advantage of the knowledge of the other man's position gained by the exchange of words. They therefore took a few steps to disconcert each other, and then began to grope for each other in the darkness.

D'Aspremont stumbled on a stone. The slight sound told the Neapolitan, who was brandishing his knife in space the direction in which he must go. Bending low in order to spring with greater force, he

leaped forward like a tiger and struck full upon d'Aspremont's stiletto.

Paul felt the point of his weapon, and felt it wet. He heard staggering steps upon the pavement; heard a deep groan, and a body falling heavily to the earth.

Horrified, he snatched off the handkerchief and beheld Count d'Altavilla, pale and motionless, stretched on his back, and a great red stain on his shirt just above the heart. The handsome Neapolitan was dead!

Paul placed upon the Count's breast the note that certified to the fairness of the duel, and left the baths paler in the broad daylight than is in the moonlight the criminal whom Prud'hon has represented as pursued by the avenging Erinnyes.

XIV

AT about two o'clock that afternoon, a company of English tourists, in charge of a cicerone, was visiting the ruins of Pompeii. The island tribe, composed of a father, a mother, three tall girls, two small boys, and a cousin, had already traversed with dull, lack-lustre eyes, in which could be read the profound weariness characteristic of the British race, the amphitheatre, the Tragic Theatre, and the Comic Theatre, so quaintly collocated, the military quarter, full of the caricatures sketched by the idle guardsmen, the Forum, destroyed while it was undergoing repairs, the Basilica, the Pantheon, the Temples of Venus and of Jupiter, and the shops which line them. They all followed silently in their "Murray" the prolix explanations of the guide, scarcely casting a look at the pillars, the fragments of statues, the mosaics, the frescoes, and the inscriptions.

They at last reached the Baths, discovered, as the guide pointed out, in 1824. "Here stood the vapour baths; here was the furnace, and there the cooling

room." These details, imparted in Neapolitan dialect, mingled with a few English terminations, did not appear to greatly interest the visitors, who had already turned round in order to go out, when Miss Ethelwina, the eldest of the young ladies, a maiden with tow-like fair hair, and a very much freckled complexion, started back, half-shocked, half-frightened, exclaiming: —

"There 's a man!"

"No doubt some workman employed in the work of digging, who thought this was a good place in which to enjoy a siesta, as it is cool and shady in this vault," answered the guide. "You need not be afraid, Miss." And he kicked the prone body. "Here, you fellow, wake up and let their ladyships pass."

But the supposed sleeper did not budge.

"He is not sleeping, he is dead," said one of the lads, who, owing to his smaller stature, could better make out the look of the body in the darkness.

The guide bent down to examine the body and started up quickly, his face full of terror.

"The man has been murdered!" he cried.

"Oh! how shocking to come upon such a thing," exclaimed Mrs. Bracebridge. "Come away, Ethel-

wina, Kitty, and Bess," she went on. "It is not proper for young ladies who have been well brought up to look at so unpleasant a sight. Is there no police in this country? Why has not the coroner removed the body?"

"Here is a paper," said the cousin, who was tall, stiff, and awkward as the Laird of Dumbiedikes in "The Heart of Midlothian."

"True," said the guide, picking up the note placed upon d'Altavilla's breast.

"Read it out," cried the islanders in a body, their curiosity fully awakened.

"Let no one be sought out or prosecuted on account of my death. If this note is found on my wound, I shall have fallen in a fair duel.

"Felipe, Count D'Altavilla."

"He was a man of rank. It is most sad," said Mrs. Bracebridge, impressed by the dead man's title.

"And handsome," whispered Miss Ethelwina the freckled.

"You cannot complain any longer of not meeting with anything startling on our trip," said Bess to Kitty, "for if we have not been stopped by brigands on the

road from Terracina to Fondi, to come upon a young nobleman stabbed with a stiletto in the ruins of Pompeii is surely an adventure. There must have been some love affair at the bottom of it, and we shall now have something Italian, picturesque, and romantic to tell our friends. I shall make a sketch of the scene in my album, and you can add to it some mysterious stanzas in the Byronian style."

"All the same," said the guide, "the stroke was a good one, from below upwards, quite according to rule, and no mistake."

Such was the funeral discourse pronounced over the body of Count d'Altavilla.

Some workmen, summoned by the guide, proceeded to fetch the police, and poor d'Altavilla's remains were conveyed to his family seat near Salerno.

As for d'Aspremont, he had returned to his carriage with staring eyes, seeing no more than a somnambulist would have done. He looked like a statue walking along. Although the sight of the body had filled him with the religious awe inspired by death, he did not feel guilty and there was no remorse in his despair. Insulted in a way that admitted of no refusal, he had accepted the duel only in the hope of losing in it a life

that was henceforth odious to him. Gifted with a deadly glance, he had insisted upon the blindfolding in order that fatality alone should bear the responsibility of the outcome. He had not even struck the blow; his foe had rushed upon the blade. He felt as sorry for d'Altavilla as if he had had nothing to do with his death.

"It was my stiletto that slew him," he said to himself. "Now, if I had looked at him in a ball-room, a chandelier would have fallen from the ceiling and broken his head. I am as innocent as the thunderbolt, the avalanche, the manchineel tree, as all destructive, unconscious forces. My will has never been maleficent, my heart is full of love and kindliness, but I know that I am a harmful being. The thunderbolt does not know that it inflicts death, but I, who am a man, an intelligent creature, have I not a hard duty to fulfil towards myself? I am bound to summon myself to the bar of my own conscience and to examine myself. Have I the right to remain on this earth where I do nothing but work woe? Would God damn me if I were to kill myself for love of my fellow-creatures? It is a terrible and difficult question I dare not solve. Yet it seems to me that suicide is

excusable in a man situated as I am. But if I am mistaken? Then throughout eternity I should be deprived of the sight of Alicia, whom then I could gaze upon without hurting her, for the eyes of the soul are free from the fascino. That is a risk I shall not run."

A sudden thought flashed through the brain of the unfortunate jettatore, breaking in upon his mental monologue. His features relaxed, and the peace that comes of a great resolution smoothed his pale brow. He had come to a supreme decision.

"Be ye condemned, ye eyes of mine, since ye are murderous. But before closing for ever, saturate yourselves with light, gaze upon the sun, the blue sky, the mighty sea, the green trees, the far horizons, the palace colonnades, the fishers' huts, the distant isles in the bay, the white sails flitting over the deep, Vesuvius and its plume of smoke; gaze upon all these lovely sights that you shall never again behold, so that you may remember them. Study every form and every tint, feast on them for the last time. To-day, whether ye be deadly or not, ye shall rest upon every thing and intoxicate yourselves with the glorious spectacle of creation. Come! look around, for the cur-

tain is about to fall between you and this earthly scene!"

The carriage, at this moment, was driving along the shore. The azure bay glittered in the light; the sky seemed made of a single sapphire; a splendour of beauty was on all things. Paul ordered Scazziga to pull up; he alighted, sat down upon a rock, and looked long, long, long, as though he were striving to imbibe the infinite. His eyes plunged into space and light, rolled as though in ecstasy, filled themselves with the colour, and absorbed the sunshine. The night that was about to fall upon him was to have no morrow.

Tearing himself away from his contemplation, d'Aspremont re-entered his carriage and had himself driven to Miss Ward's.

He found her, as on the previous day, lying upon her narrow couch in the lower room I have already described. Paul sat down opposite her, and this time he did not keep his eyes on the ground as was his habit since he had learned he was a jettatore.

Alicia's wondrously perfect beauty had become idealised through suffering; the woman in her had almost disappeared and made way for the angel. Her flesh had become transparent, ethereal, luminous.

Her soul shone through it as the flame through an alabaster lamp. Her eyes were filled with the infinity of the heavens and scintillated like stars; scarce did the mark of life show in her crimson lips.

A heavenly smile, like a sunbeam in a rose, illumined those lips when she saw her lover's glance envelop her like a long caress. She thought Paul had at last got rid of his fancies and was returning to her happy and trustful as in the early days of their love. She held out to him her little white, slender hand, and he kept it in his own.

"So you are no longer afraid of me," she said with sweet raillery to Paul, who still kept his glance fixed upon her.

"Oh! let me gaze upon you," replied d'Aspremont in a strange tone of voice as he knelt down by her. "Let me drink in your ineffable beauty."

And he eagerly contemplated Alicia's lustrous black hair, her lovely brow as pure as that of a Greek statue, her eyes dusky blue as a lovely night, her delicately modelled nose, her mouth with the pearly teeth revealed by a languorous smile, her willowy, swan-like neck, and he seemed to note each detail, each perfection as might a painter preparing to draw a portrait from

memory. He was sating himself with the sight of the beloved one, making a collection of remembrances, assuring himself of the outlines, going over the contours.

Under his burning gaze, Alicia, fascinated and charmed, experienced a voluptuously painful sensation, pleasantly deadly. Her life seemed to become more intense and to be leaving her; she blushed and paled, turned hot and cold by turns. In another moment her soul would have fled.

She put her hand on Paul's eyes, but his glance traversed the transparent and frail fingers like a flame.

"Now my eyes may close for ever, for in my heart I shall see her for ever," said Paul to himself as he rose to his feet.

That night, after having looked at the sunset — the last he was to behold — he ordered, on his return to the Hôtel de Rome, a brazier and charcoal.

"Does he propose to asphyxiate himself?" wondered Virgilio Falsacappa, as he handed Paddy the required articles. "It is the best thing that cursed jettatore could do."

Alicia's betrothed opened the window, contrary to Falsacappa's expectation, lighted the coals, plunged the

blade of a dagger into them, and waited until the steel had become red hot.

The thin blade soon showed white-hot in the burning coals. Paul, as if to bid himself farewell, leaned on the mantelpiece in front of a tall mirror that reflected the light of a candelabrum with a number of candles. He gazed with melancholy curiosity upon that sort of spectre that was himself, that envelope of his thought he was never again to see.

"Farewell," he said, "farewell, pale phantom that for so many years I have dragged through life; farewell, sinister failure in which beauty mingles with horror; mould of clay stamped on the brow with a fatal sign; contorted mask of a tender and gentle soul! Thou art about to vanish for ever from my sight. Living, I plunge thee into eternal darkness, and soon I shall have forgotten thee as one forgets the dream of a night of storm. In vain shalt thou say, thou wretched body, to my inflexible will, 'Hubert, Hubert, my poor eyes!' Thou shalt not soften it. Come, let me to work, for I am both the victim and the executioner."

And he left the chimneypiece to seat himself on his bed.

He blew upon the coals in the brazier that stood on a table near by, and seized by the hilt the blade, from which flew with a crackling sound bright, white sparks.

At this crucial moment, firm as was his resolve, d'Aspremont felt himself turn faint; a cold sweat bathed his temples; but he soon overcame this purely physical weakness and put the burning steel close to his eyes.

He nearly screamed as he felt a sharp, lancinating pain. It seemed to him that two jets of molten lead were entering his eyes and penetrating to his very brain. He let fall the dagger, which rolled to the floor and charred it.

A dense, opaque darkness, in comparison with which the deepest night is as brightest day, shrouded him in its black veils. He turned his head in the direction of the mantelpiece where the tapers must have been still burning, but met only profound, impenetrable obscurity, in which did not even show the faint gleams which seeing people behold when with closed eyes they find themselves in presence of a light. His sacrifice was accomplished.

"Now," said Paul, "thou noble and charming creature, I may become thy husband without becoming a murderer. No longer shalt thou waste away

under my destructive glance; thou shalt regain thy health. Alas! I shall see thee no more, but thy celestial image shall shine with immortal brilliancy in my memory; I shall behold thee with the eyes of the soul; I shall hear thy voice, more harmonious than the sweetest music; I shall feel the air displaced by thy motions; I shall notice the silken rustling of thy dress, the faint creaking of thy shoes; I shall breathe the soft scent that emanates from thee, forming an atmosphere round thee. At times thou shalt leave thy hand in mine to make me feel thy presence; thou wilt deign to guide thy poor blind lover when his steps hesitate upon their dark way; thou shalt read him the poets, and tell him of the paintings and the statues. Thy speech shall restore to him the vanished universe; thou shalt be his one thought, his one dream. Freed from the distraction of things and the dazzling light, his soul shall fly to thee on unwearying wings.

"I regret nothing, since thou art saved. What have I lost, indeed? The monotonous spectacle of the seasons and the days; of the more or less picturesque setting of the scenes in which the many differing acts of the sad human comedy are played, earth, heaven, waters, mountains, trees, and flowers:

vain appearances, wearisome repetitions, unchanging forms. He who possesses love, possesses the true sunshine, the light that never fails."

Thus did the unfortunate Paul d'Aspremont commune with himself, a prey to lyrical excitement mingled with the delirium due to pain. Little by little the acute suffering was dulled, and he fell into dark sleep, brother of death and like it a consoler.

When daylight penetrated into the room, it did not wake him. Midnight and noon were henceforth the same to him, but the bells, ringing out the Angelus with joyous peals, sounded faint through his sleep and, gradually becoming more distinct, drew him from his condition of somnolence.

He opened his eyelids, and, ere his soul had recollected, experienced a horrible sensation. His eyes opened out upon the void, the darkness, the nothingness, as if, having been buried alive, he had awakened out of a trance and found himself in his coffin. He soon recovered, however, for was it not to be always thus? Was he not, day by day, to pass from the darkness of sleep to the darkness of waking?

He groped round for the bell-rope. Paddy hastened to answer his ring, and as he manifested surprise at

seeing his master rise with the hesitating movements of a blind man, —

"I was imprudent enough to sleep with the window open," said Paul, in order to cut short all explanations, "and I think I have got amaurosis. I shall soon be better. Lead me to my arm-chair and put a glass of fresh water by my side."

Paddy, with true English discretion, made no comment, carried out his master's orders, and withdrew.

Left alone, Paul dipped his handkerchief in the cold water and held it to his eyes to deaden the inflammation due to the burning.

But let me leave d'Aspremont in his painful immobility, and let me turn to the other characters in my story.

The strange news of Count d'Altavilla's death had quickly spread through Naples and furnished food for innumerable conjectures, each more absurd than the others. The Count was famed for his skill as a swordsman; he had the reputation of being one of the most expert fencers of the Neapolitan school, so dangerous on the duelling-ground. He had killed three men and had grievously wounded five or six. His reputation in this respect was so well known that he was no longer

called out; the most insolent duellists saluted him respectfully, and, if he happened to look insultingly at them, avoided treading on his toes. Had one of these swashbucklers slain d'Altavilla, he would not have failed to brag of the victory.

There remained the possibility of murder, but that was removed by the paper found on the dead man's breast. The authenticity of the note was at first called in question, but the Count's handwriting was vouched for by persons who had received many letters from him. The fact that he had been blindfolded, for the body was found with a handkerchief fastened round the head, proved an insurmountable difficulty. Besides the stiletto driven into the Count's breast, a second one was found, which no doubt had fallen from his hand. On the other hand, if the duel had been fought with knives, what was the purpose of the swords and pistols which were recognised as having been the Count's property? The coachman, on being questioned, stated that he had driven his master to Pompeii, and had been ordered to return home if the latter did not reappear within an hour. The mystery could not be solved.

The report of the death speedily reached the ears of Vicè, who informed Sir Joshua Ward. The Commo-

dore, who at once recollected his mysterious conversation with d'Altavilla about Alicia, suspected that some dark attempt, some horrible and desperate struggle had taken place between him and d'Aspremont, with or without the consent of the latter. As for Vicè, she did not hesitate to attribute the death of the handsome Count to the atrocious jettatore, her hatred of the latter acting as second sight. Yet Mr. d'Aspremont had paid his visit to Miss Ward at the usual time, and his countenance did not betray the least sign of emotion after a terrible drama; indeed, he appeared calmer than usual.

The fact of the death was concealed from Miss Ward, whose condition had become critical, though the English physician summoned by Sir Joshua could not perceive that she was suffering from any definite malady. Her life seemed to be ebbing away; her soul seemed to be fluttering its wings in an attempt to escape; she appeared to be suffocating, like a bird in a vacuum, rather than to be attacked by a real disease, capable of being treated by ordinary means. She looked like an angel kept back on earth and dying of home-sickness of heaven, — her loveliness so suave, so delicate, so diaphanous, so immaterial, that the coarse atmosphere

of earth could no longer sustain her. One could only imagine her soaring in the golden light of Paradise, and the little lace pillow that supported her head shone like an aureole. As she lay on her bed, she resembled Schoorel's dainty Virgin, the most delicate gem of Gothic art.

Mr. d'Aspremont did not call that day. In order to conceal his sacrifice, he had resolved not to appear with his eyelids inflamed, reserving to himself to explain his blindness by some other cause. But the next morning, the pain having ceased, he entered his carriage, guided by his groom Paddy.

The carriage drew up as usual at the open-work gate. The self-blinded man pushed it open, and feeling the ground with his foot, entered the well-known walk. Vicè had not, as her custom was, hastened up on hearing the bell which was rung by the opening of the gate. None of the innumerable joyous sounds that form, as it were, the breathing of an inhabited house, reached Paul's attentive ear. A gloomy, deep, terrifying silence reigned in the dwelling, which might have been thought abandoned. This silence, sinister even to a seeing person, became still more dread in the darkness that surrounded the new-made blind man.

The branches, which he could no longer perceive, seemed to try to hold him back like the arms of suppliants and to prevent his going farther. The laurels barred his way; the rose-bushes caught at his clothing; the creepers clung to his limbs; the garden said to him in its mute voice: "Unfortunate man, what doest thou here? Do not force the obstacles that I oppose to thee; return, return!" But Paul did not listen, and tormented by dreadful presentiments, lurched into the foliage, pushed back the clumps of verdure, broke the branches, and kept on towards the house.

Torn and bruised by the angry shrubs, he at last reached the end of the walk. A gust of free air struck him on the face, and he continued on his way with outstretched hands. He came up against the wall, and found the door by groping for it.

He entered. No friendly voice welcomed him. Hearing no sound by which he might guide himself, he hesitated for a moment upon the threshold. A smell of ether, the perfume of aromatics, the odour of burning wax, all the faint scents of a room of death came to the blind man breathless with terror. A dreadful idea came into his mind, and he entered the room.

He had scarcely proceeded a few steps when he

knocked up against something that fell with much noise. He bent down, and recognised by the feel a metal candlestick like those in churches, and fitted with a tall candle.

Bewildered, he went on his way through the darkness. He thought he heard a voice repeating prayers in a low tone. He took another step forward and his hands touched the edge of a couch. He bent over it, and his trembling fingers first came in contact with a motionless body lying stiff and stark under a fine tunic; then they felt a wreath of roses and a face as pure and cold as marble.

It was Alicia lying on her death-bed.

"Dead!" shrieked Paul in a choking voice. "Dead! And I have killed her!"

The horror-stricken Commodore had seen the blind phantom stagger in, grope his way about and stumble against Alicia's death-bed. He had understood at once, and the grandeur of the sacrifice, unfortunately useless, brought the tears to the reddened eyes of the old gentleman who had believed himself incapable of weeping again.

Paul threw himself on his knees by the bedside and covered Alicia's ice-cold hand with kisses, while con-

vulsive sobs shook his frame. His grief softened the fierce Vicè herself, as she stood silent and sombre by the wall, watching over her mistress' last sleep.

When his adieux were over, d'Aspremont rose and walked to the door, stiffly, like an automaton moved by springs. His sightless eyes, wide open and staring, had a supernatural expression, and though they were blinded they seemed still endowed with vision. He traversed the garden with the heavy tread of a marble statue, went out into the country and walked on straight ahead, stumbling against the stones, staggering at times, listening intently as if to catch a distant sound, but ever advancing.

The sea's great voice sounded more and more distinct. The billows, lashed by a storm wind, broke on the shore with mighty sobs, expressing unknown griefs, and under the foam fringe swelled their despairing breasts; millions of bitter tears streamed upon the rocks, and the restless gulls uttered plaintive cries.

Presently Paul reached the edge of an overhanging rock. The roar of the waves, the salt spray torn from the billows by the gusts of wind and which lashed his face, should have warned him of his danger, but he heeded it not. A strange smile flitted over his blanched

lips and he kept on his sinister walk, although he felt the void beneath his lifted foot.

He fell; a huge billow seized him, rolled him over and over for a moment and then swallowed him up.

Then the storm broke out in its fury; the waves swept up the shore in serried files, like soldiers storming a fort, and threw the spray of their crests fifty feet into the air. The black clouds were torn open as though they were the walls of hell, and through the fissures showed the burning furnace of the lightnings; sulphurous, blinding flashes illumined space; the summit of Vesuvius glowed, and its sable plume of smoke, beaten down by the wind, curled around the volcano's brow. The vessels at anchor collided with lugubrious sounds, and the tautened rigging moaned dolorously. Then the rain came down, its drops like driven bolts, and it seemed as though chaos were striving to reassert its supremacy over nature and once again to confound the elements.

All the efforts set on foot by the Commodore failed to bring about the recovery of Paul d'Aspremont's body.

A silver-mounted, satin-lined, ebony casket, like the one concerning which Clarissa Harlowe wrote so

touchingly to Master Undertaker, was shipped on board a yacht under the Commodore's superintendence, and subsequently deposited in the family vault in the Lincolnshire seat. It contained the mortal remains of Alicia Ward, lovely even in death.

As for the Commodore, a great change has taken place in him. He is no longer stout, puts no rum in his tea, eats very little, talks less, and has lost his crimson and white look — for he has become pale.

The Water Pavilion

The WATER PAVILION

IN the province of Canton, some distance from the city, lived side by side two rich Chinamen who had retired. At what period this took place is of small consequence, for the chronology of tales need not be very accurate. One of the Chinamen was called Tou, and the other Kouan. Tou had held high scientific offices; he was a scholar of the Jasper Hall and a *hanlin*. Kouan had grown rich and honoured in less exalted employment.

Tou and Kouan, who were distantly related, had formerly been friends. When they were younger they had enjoyed meeting with some of their former class-mates and during the autumn evenings they were wont to make the black pigment-laden brush fly over the quadrilling of the flowered paper, and to sing the praises of the chrysanthemum while sipping small cups of wine. Their dispositions, at first marked by the very slightest of divergences, had with time become wholly different, just as an almond bough forks, so that the two parts, united at the bottom, are far apart at the top, and the one scatters its bitter perfume in the garden,

while the other sheds its snowy blossoms outside the wall.

Year by year Tou became more imposing; his paunch rounded out more majestically, his triple chin looked more solemn. He now wrote only moral verses suitable for hanging on the posts of the pavilions.

Kouan, on the contrary, seemed to grow jollier as he grew older, and sang more delightedly than ever wine, flowers, and swallows. His mind, freed from vulgar cares, was quick and bright as that of a young man, and when the word to be set in verse had been announced, his hand did not hesitate for a second.

Little by little the two friends had got to hate each other. They never spoke but they irritated each other by sharp words; they were like two hedges bristling with thorns and briers. Matters came to such a pass that they ceased to have anything to do with each other, and hung on the front of their houses a tablet bearing a formal interdiction to the inhabitants of the neighbouring home ever to cross the threshold of theirs.

They would willingly have uprooted their homes and planted them elsewhere, but unfortunately this was not possible. Tou, indeed, tried to sell his property, but he could not get his price, and, besides, it is

always unpleasant to have to leave the carved walls, the polished tables, the transparent windows, the gilded trellises, the bamboo seats, the porcelain vases, the red or black lacquer cabinets, the cartouches of ancient poems, which one has taken so much pains to arrange. It is hard to hand over to another man the garden one has planted with willows, peach and plum trees, and where, in each successive springtime, one has watched the blooming of the pretty mei flower. Each of these things binds the heart of man with a thread more tenuous than silk, but as hard to break as an iron chain.

At the time when Tou and Kouan were friends, they had each built a pavilion in their garden, upon the bank of a pond that was owned jointly by them. They used to enjoy greeting each other from the balcony and smoking a drop of burning opium upon the porcelain mushroom pipe as they exchanged kindly puffs. Since they had quarrelled, however, they had built a wall that cut the pond into two equal parts; only, as the pond was deep, the wall rested upon piles forming low arches, through the openings of which passed the waters that reflected the pavilion on the other side.

Each pavilion was three stories in height, with receding terraces. The roofs, curved and turned up at the corners like clogs, were covered with round, shining tiles like the scales that cover the belly of carps. On each ridge were crocketings in the form of leaves and dragons. Red varnished pillars, joined by a traceried frieze, resembling the blade of a fan, supported the elegant roof. The shafts of these pillars rested upon a little low wall, overlaid with porcelain squares arranged in pleasant symmetry, and protected by a railing of quaint design, the whole forming a sort of open gallery in front of the main building.

The same arrangement was repeated, with some variants, on each story. In the one case the porcelain tiles were replaced by *bassi-relievi* illustrating pastoral scenes; or a trellis work of curiously interlaced branches of quaintest twists took the place of the balcony, or, again, posts, painted in bright colours, formed pedestals on which were set warty monsters and fantastic figures, the result of the union of every sort of impossibility. The buildings each ended in a wrought and gilded cornice, with a balustrade of bamboos, selected for the regularity of the knots, and adorned in each compartment with a ball of metal.

The interior was no less sumptuous. On the walls a skilful hand had inscribed in perpendicular lines, in gilded letters upon a lacquer background, verses of Tou Chi and Li Tai Pe. A milky, opaline light filtered through the windows, fitted with panes of talc. On the window sills artistically arranged pots of peonies, Chinese primroses, white blossomed erythrinas, delighted the eyes with their delicate tints. Squares of beautiful flowered silk were placed in the corners of the various rooms, and on the tables, that were polished like mirrors, were always to be found toothpicks, fans, ebony pipes, brushes, and all necessary writing materials.

Artificial rockeries, in which grew willows and walnut trees, formed the foundations of these pretty buildings on the land side, while on the water side they rested on indestructible piles.

It was really a delightful spectacle to see the willows' golden filaments and silken tufts streaming down towards the surface of the water, and the brilliant colours of the pavilions reflected within a framework of multicoloured foliage.

In the crystal wave gambolled shoals of azure fishes, with golden scales; squadrons of pretty ducks with emerald necks sailed about in every direction, and the

broad leaves of the nymphœa nelumbo spread out lazily under the diamond-like transparency of the lakelet, that was fed by a spring.

Save in the centre, where the bottom was formed of exceedingly fine silvery sand, and where the bubbling up of the spring did not allow the water plants to take root, the rest of the pond was covered with the loveliest green velvet carpet that ever was seen, formed by great banks of water-cress.

But for the ugly wall erected by the reciprocal enmity of the two neighbours, there certainly would not have been anywhere in the Middle Empire, which, as every one knows, covers more than three fourths of the earth's surface, a more picturesque and more delightful garden. Each one could have increased his property with the view over his neighbour's, for here below man can have only the outward aspect of things. Such as it was, however, no sage could have wished for a pleasanter and more agreeable retreat in which to end his days in the contemplation of nature and the charm of poetry.

All Tou and Kouan had gained by their quarrel was the sight of an ugly wall, and the depriving each other of the view of the lovely pavilions, but the

thought of the annoyance they had inflicted on each other consoled them.

This state of things had lasted for some years, and nettles and other weeds had overgrown the paths that led from the one house to the other. The branches of the thorn bushes had become interlaced, as though to prevent any intercommunication. It looked as though the plants were aware of the dissensions between the two former friends and took part in them by trying to separate them still further.

Meanwhile Tou's wife and Kouan's had each given birth to a child. Mrs. Tou was the mother of a lovely girl, and Mrs. Kouan of the handsomest boy in the world. This happy event, which had brought joy to each household, was unknown to the other, for although their properties marched with each other, the two Chinamen lived as much apart as though their homes had been divided by the Yellow River or the Great Wall, and their mutual friends avoided making any allusion to the other family, while the respective servants had orders not to speak to each other when they met, under pain of the lash and the cangue.

The boy was called Tchin Sing, and the girl Ju Kiouan, that is, Pearl and Jasper, names well borne

out by their perfect beauty. As soon as they had grown up a little, the wall, which cut the pond into two parts and annoyingly closed the view on that side, excited their curiosity, and they asked their parents what there was on the other side of that erection so curiously placed in the centre of the stretch of water, and whose were the high trees the tops of which they could see. They were told that queer, disagreeable, unpleasant, and wholly unsociable people lived there, and that the wall had been put up as a protection against these wicked neighbours. The children were satisfied with the explanation, and having got used to the wall, did not trouble about it any more.

Ju Kiouan grew in grace and perfection. She was skilled in all the occupations of her sex, and plied her needle with incomparable adroitness. The butterflies she embroidered upon satin seemed to be alive and to flutter their wings; one would have sworn that the birds she wrought upon her canvas could be heard singing, and more than one person bent down to breathe the perfume of the flowers she scattered upon it. Nor were Ju Kiouan's accomplishments confined to this; she knew by heart the Book of Odes and the Five Rules of Life, and never did a lighter hand trace

on silk paper bolder and clearer characters. The flight of dragons is not swifter than her wrist when she sprayed the black ink with a brush. She knew all the poetic modes, the Slow, the Quick, the Elevated, the Re-entering, and composed very meritorious pieces on such subjects as naturally strike a maiden: the return of the swallows, the willows in springtime, the chrysanthemums, and other kindred topics. More than one scholar who considered himself worthy of bestriding the golden steed could not have improvised as easily as she did.

Nor had Tchin Sing profited less by his studies. His name stood first on the examiners' list, and although he was still very young, he might have worn the black cap, while every mother already reflected that a youth so learned would make an excellent son-in-law and would speedily attain to the highest literary dignities. Tchin Sing, however, replied pleasantly to the negotiators who were sent to him, and said that it was too early for him to marry, that he wished to enjoy his bachelor freedom for some time longer. He refused one after the other Hon Giu, Lo Men Gli, Oma, Po Fo and other very well bred young ladies. Never was any youth more petted and the recipient

of more advances, not even the handsome Fan Gan, whose carriage was filled with sweets and oranges by the ladies as he drove home after practising shooting with his bow and arrows. But Tchin Sing's heart appeared to be insensible to love, not through coldness, however, for by a thousand signs it was plain that he was tender-hearted; only it seemed as though he preserved the memory of some one he had known in a previous life and hoped to meet in this world. In vain were the willow-leaf-like eyebrows, the tiny feet and the dragon-fly waists of the beauties proposed to him praised; he listened inattentively and as if his thoughts were elsewhere.

On her part Ju Kiouan proved no less difficult to please, and dismissed all her suitors, the one because he bowed ungracefully, the other because he was careless in his dress, a third because his handwriting was heavy and vulgar, a fourth because he did not know the Book of Verses — in a word, all suffered from some defect or other. Ju Kiouan drew such comical portraits of them that her parents were compelled to laugh at them, and as politely as possible showed out the unfortunate suitor who had already imagined himself entering the Oriental pavilion.

At last the parents of the two young people began to feel some alarm at their persistent rejection of every match proposed to them. Mrs. Tou and Mrs. Kouan, no doubt preoccupied by thoughts of settling their children, dreamed at night of what they thought of all day long, and one of their dreams made a great impression upon them. Mrs. Kouan dreamed that she saw upon her son's breast a jasper stone so marvellously polished that it gleamed like a carbuncle. On the other hand, Mrs. Tou dreamed that her daughter was wearing on her neck a pearl of the finest water and of priceless value. What could these two dreams mean? Did the vision vouchsafed to Mrs. Kouan foretell for Tchin Sing the honours of the Imperial Academy, and did that of Mrs. Tou presage that Ju Kiouan was to find a treasure buried in the garden or hidden under a stone of the hearth? This view was entirely reasonable, and more than one person would have been satisfied with it, but the worthy ladies saw in these visions allusions to excellent matches soon to be made by their respective children. Unfortunately, both Tchin Sing and Ju Kiouan persisted more resolutely than ever in their refusals and thus gave the lie to the prophecies.

Although they had no dreams, Kouan and Tou were also amazed at the young people's obstinacy, marriage being a ceremony which does not usually excite prolonged aversion in youths and maidens. They fancied that their resistance might be due to some secret attachment, but Tchin Sing paid attentions to no girl, and no young man wandered by the trellises of Ju Kiouan, as both families easily ascertained after a few days' watching. Mrs. Tou and Mrs. Kouan were therefore more than ever convinced that the dreams foretold great destinies for their offspring.

The two ladies each went to consult the priest of the Temple of Fô, a handsome building with traceried roofs, round windows, a tower glittering with varnish and gilding, overlaid with votive tablets, adorned with flag-poles from which flew banners ornamented with monsters and dragons, and shaded by trees centuries old and of enormous size. After having burned gilded paper and perfumes before the idol, the priest told Mrs. Tou that the jasper must have the pearl, and told Mrs. Kouan that the pearl must have the jasper, as their union alone could put an end to all difficulties. Little satisfied with this ambiguous reply, the two ladies returned home, without having met in the temple, by a road

different from that by which they had come, and as greatly perplexed as before.

Now it happened that Ju Kiouan was one day leaning on the balcony of the rustic pavilion precisely at the moment when Tchin Sing was doing the same. The weather was fine; there was not a cloud in the sky, nor wind enough to move the leaves of the quivering aspen, and not a ripple on the glass-smooth surface of the pond. Only now and again did a carp, leaping and gambolling, make a circle that soon disappeared. The trees on the bank were so accurately reflected in it that it was hard to tell the image from the reality; they looked like a forest planted upside down and uniting its roots with those of an identical wood; like a grove that had drowned itself for love, in a word. The fish seemed to swim in the foliage, and the birds to be flying in the water.

Ju Kiouan was amusing herself watching this wonderful transparency when, on glancing at that part of the pond that lay by the dividing wall, she saw the reflection of the opposite pavilion that spread to that point through the arch. She had never noticed this optical effect, which both surprised and interested her. She could make out the red pillars, the traceried frieze,

the pots of chrysanthemums, the gilded vanes, and but that they were reversed by the reflection, she could have read the inscriptions on the tablets. But what most surprised her was to see leaning upon the rail of the balcony, in a position exactly like her own, a figure so like herself that, had it not shown from the other side of the wall, she would have taken it for her own image. It was the figure of Tchin Sing, and if my reader thinks it strange that a young fellow should be mistaken for a girl, I shall reply that Tchin Sing had taken off his licentiate's cap on account of the heat, that he was still very young and beardless, and that his delicate features, his smooth complexion and his brilliant eyes might well contribute to the illusion, which for the matter of that, was not of long duration. Ju Kiouan quickly felt, by the beating of her heart, that it was no girl whose image was reflected in the wave.

Until then she had not believed that earth held the being created for her, and she had often longed to possess one of Fargana's horses, that can travel three thousand miles in one day, so that she might seek him out in unknown space. She fancied her mate did not exist in this world, and that she would never know the happiness of the union of the teals. "Never," she would

say to herself, "shall I consecrate on the altar of my ancestors the drop of water and the alisma, and I shall enter alone the grove of mulberries and elms."

But when she beheld the reflection in the water, she knew that her beauty had a sister, or a brother, rather, and far from being annoyed at this, she felt exceedingly happy. The pride of being unique quickly yielded to love, for from that moment Ju Kiouan's heart was for ever given. The exchange of a single glance, not even directly, but by reflection, is sufficient to bring about such a result. And let not Ju Kiouan be accused of frivolity on that account, and let it not be said that she was foolish to fall in love with a man merely for having seen his reflection in the water. What more, unless one has the advantage of long acquaintance, so that the character may be studied, does a girl see of a suitor? His outward aspect only, like his reflection in a mirror; and is it not the wont of maidens to judge of their future husbands by the enamel of their teeth and the cut of their nails?

Tchin Sing also had caught sight of the wondrous beauty.

"Am I dreaming, while awake?" he exclaimed. "Surely that lovely face sparkling in the crystal water

was formed of the moon's silvery beams and of the most subtile aroma of the flowers on some spring night. Though I have never seen her, I recognise her: she is indeed the woman whose image is engraved on my heart, the fair unknown to whom I address my distichs and my quatrains."

Tchin Sing had got so far in his monologue, when he heard his father's voice calling to him.

"My son," said the old gentleman, "my friend Wing has called to propose a very rich and suitable match for you. The young lady has imperial blood in her veins; she is famous for her beauty, and has all the qualities fitted to make a husband happy."

Tchin Sing, full of the incident of the pavilion and burning with love for the girl whose image he had seen in the water, refused unhesitatingly. His father, transported with rage, lost his temper and hurled the fiercest threats at him.

"You scoundrel," cried the old gentleman, "if you persist in your obstinacy, I shall ask the magistrate to have you imprisoned in the fortress held by the Western barbarians, and from which nothing can be seen save rocks washed by the waves, mountains capped with clouds, and dark waters traversed by those mon-

strous inventions of the evil genii, which travel with paddles and vomit fetid smoke. There you will have leisure to reflect and to mend your ways."

These threats did not greatly frighten Tchin Sing, who replied that he was ready to accept the first bride that came along, provided it were not the one now offered him.

The next day, at the same hour, he returned to the rural pavilion, and as on the previous day, he leaned over the railing of the balcony. In a few minutes, he saw Ju Kiouan's image reflected on the water like a bouquet of submerged flowers. The young man put his hand to his heart, kissed the tip of his fingers and blew the kiss to the reflection with a gesture full of grace and love.

A smile of happiness bloomed like a pomegranate bud in the transparent water and proved to Tchin Sing that he was not indifferent to the fair unknown, but as it is not possible to carry on a long conversation with a reflection of which the body is invisible, he made a sign that he was about to write and returned into the pavilion. A few minutes later he came out, holding a square of tinted silver paper on which he had improvised a declaration of love in seven syllables.

He rolled it up and enclosed it in the calyx of a flower, which he put into a broad water-lily leaf, and placed the parcel gently on the water.

A light air, that arose most seasonably, drove the love letter towards one of the bays in the wall, so that all Ju Kiouan had to do was to bend and pick it up. Fearful of being surprised, she withdrew to her most secret chamber, and there read with infinite pleasure the expressions of love and the metaphors of which Tchin Sing had made use. Besides the delight of being loved, she had the satisfaction of being so by a scholarly man, for the beauty of the handwriting, the selection of the words, the excellence of the rimes and the brilliancy of the images testified to his admirable education. What most struck her was the name Tchin Sing. She had too often heard her mother tell of her dreaming of a pearl not to be struck by this coincidence, and she did not for a moment doubt but that Tchin Sing was the husband Heaven meant for her.

The next day, as the wind had gone round, Ju Kiouan sent in the same way towards the opposite pavilion, a reply in verse, in which, in spite of the modesty natural in a girl, it was easy to read that she shared Tchin Sing's love.

As he read the signature to the letter, Tchin Sing could not repress an exclamation of surprise: —

"Jasper! Was not that the gem my mother saw in her dream gleaming upon my breast like a carbuncle? Decidedly, I must call at that house, for it is there that dwells the bride promised me by the spirits of night."

But as he started to go out, he remembered the dissensions which divided the owners and the prohibitions inscribed upon the tablets. Not knowing what he had best do, he told the whole story to his mother. Meanwhile Ju Kiouan had told hers everything that had passed. The names Jasper and Pearl appeared to the two ladies to solve the riddle, and they returned to the Temple of Fô to consult the priest.

The priest replied that they had rightly interpreted the dream, and that if they did not conform to it they would incur the wrath of Heaven. Moved by the entreaties of the two mothers, and also by some presents they gave him, he undertook to talk to both Tou and Kouan; and he so neatly trapped them that, when they learned who were the parties to the proposed match, they had already given their consent.

When the pair met, the two old friends wondered

at having quarrelled for such slight reasons, and felt how much they had lost by their separation. The wedding took place, and Pearl and Jasper were at last able to converse in a more agreeable way than by the medium of their reflections. Were they any the happier for it? I dare not venture to affirm it, for happiness is often but an image in water.

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A HISTORY OF ROMANTICISM

Introduction

ONE of the earliest, and one of the most interesting and entertaining monuments of French literature is Villehardouin's "Conquest of Constantinople." It is a simple and straightforward account of an expedition in which the writer, a typical feudal lord and knight of old, took a prominent part and won for himself fame as a warrior and a diplomatist, and later, and wholly without literary ambition, renown as a writer. The charm of that old work lies in the simplicity and artlessness of the style, in the evident pleasure the writer takes in recalling the great deeds and daring enterprises in which he was personally engaged. It is the individuality of the man, the exposition of his character and his motives and hopes, the absolutely frank and

candid statement of his views and feelings, his brilliant, because natural, description of the battles he has fought in, of the surprises and stratagems he has devised or had devised against him, of his daily life, of his cherished ideals, in a word, that even now attract and retain the reader's attention. He is so firmly convinced of the right of his cause, so sure that God is on his side and that of his comrades, so convinced that the foe must always be in the wrong, that it is simply delightful to accompany him on a crusade so singularly diverted from its original purpose.

Théophile Gautier's "History of Romanticism" possesses the same charm; is full of the same interest. Doubtless many nowadays will refuse to indorse his enthusiastic praise of the Romanticist movement and his laudation of the men who led it and who fought its battles, but no one can refuse to admire the loyalty of the writer to ideals and doctrines that he worshipped in youth, and which, in his old age, still appeal as strongly to him as they did in the happy times of yore "when all the world was young," with the fresh blood of Romanticism flowing through its veins.

It is probably quite impossible for any one born after the period when the influence of the movement was

still strongly felt, although already the Realistic school had displaced it as a powerful factor, to realise how deep was the hold it had upon men. The fascination it had exercised upon the fathers was felt by the sons, in a less degree, no doubt, but yet so strongly that it coloured their views of life and dictated their admirations. Hugo was the supreme master, and his dramas the most perfect and the most wonderful plays that had ever been written, Shakespeare's not excepted. Alfred de Musset's poems were on the tongues of all the youth of that day, and not one of them but knew his "Namouna" and his "Rolla" by heart. Imagination ran riot, and passion was the greatest thing on earth. The notion of beauty was not the calm and superb one taught by the Greek, but the more restless, more varied notion of the mediævalist, interpreted by his modern admirer. Classicists were no longer insulted, it is true, but the works of Racine were considered inferior to those of the recent poets. There was one faith — Romanticism; and one apostle and high-priest of that faith — Victor Hugo.

Now that being the case some twenty years or more after the memorable performance of "Hernani," which unquestionably marks an epoch in French literature, —

though it was not, as fondly fancied by Théophile Gautier, as great an event as the first performance of the "Cid," — it is not to be wondered at that the contemporaries of Victor Hugo, the young fellows who were inspired by him, the comrades who aided in securing the ultimate triumph of his much discussed play, should have been carried away by an enthusiasm that strikes the calm looker-on of the present time as exaggerated and even absurd. There was absurdity in it, to a certain extent, and no one recognises the fact more readily than Gautier himself in this very volume, but the mainspring of that enthusiasm, as is also set forth in the present work, was absolute and genuine love of art in all its forms, and the resolve to do or die for that art and the triumph of the ideas it represented.

It is not, then, a philosophical, a critical history of the great movement that is to be looked for in Gautier's pages, but something akin, in its way, to the old warrior's simple tale of his expedition. Gautier relates the conquest of the French mind by the Romanticist phalanx, and in the telling his own prejudices and prepossessions manifest themselves artlessly. He feels an amount of admiration for some of these long forgotten heroes of 1830 that the modern reader finds himself un-

able to share, and even, at times, to understand. Who, for instance, that has ever conscientiously waded through some of Petrus Borel's productions, can but wonder that Gautier should find so much in him, or that he should have been looked upon as one of the glories of the new school? Philothée O'Neddy is no longer a name to conjure with, and even Gérard de Nerval is not much read now. Men have arisen since those days whose works appeal, far more directly and far more effectively to the modern mind than those supposed masterpieces, doomed to early forgetfulness. The whole tone has changed. The erratic flights of fancy that delighted the Romanticists and their admiring readers pall upon the modern mind athirst for the real and the accurate. The French public itself has returned to the psychologists and the analysts, and is inclined to leave the idealists severely alone.

The title of the book might well have been more modest, perhaps, though there is no trace of conceit in Gautier. It might have been called Memoirs or Reminiscences, and indeed the latter would have described it most aptly, for it is the past that Gautier is evoking, with its memories of battle and victory, of struggle and temporary defeat, of magnificent success

and intoxicating praises sung by an applauding multitude. It is also the tale of true friendship and hearty comradeship; of enthusiastic collaboration and generous self-effacement for the sake of the master or of a beloved fellow-worker. It is a pæan in honour of the school that endowed France with a new poetry, a new form of painting, a new sense of nature, and recalled to its literature and to its art, as well as to the daily life of the people, a keener sense of the beautiful and a more tolerant notion of the differences in taste.

It is a pathetic story, on the whole, not only because it tells of a splendid dawn and a glorious noonday, soon followed by a sombre crepuscule, but also because it is told mostly of the dead. Gautier might have quoted Goethe, whom he admires so much and with such good reason: —

> "But, ah! they cannot hear my closing song
> For whom its earlier notes were tried.
> Departed is, alas! the friendly throng,
> And dumb the echoes all that once replied!"

for nearly all those with whom he had consorted in those never to be forgotten days had passed away into the Valley of the Shadow of Death. One by one he had seen them go; one by one he had followed them to

their last resting-place, and in the columns of his paper he had told of the talents and of the genius of one after another. The loneliness of old age was coming upon him; the solitude of the man who has outlived most of his contemporaries was beginning to enshroud him; the approach of his own end was unconsciously making itself felt and lent to his accents greater tenderness and depth. Standing, though he was not aware of it, upon the very threshold of the tomb, the remembrances of that hot youth of art and battle crowded thick and fast into his memory. He was again a student in Rioult's studio; again he was receiving from the hands of Gérard de Nerval the magic square of red cardboard that was to admit him to the long expected first performance of "Hernani;" again he was in that theatre crammed with friends and foes, ready to hiss or to applaud, and he, a striking figure in his brilliant costume, the memorable costume, was leading the hurricane of cheers that greeted every passage, and drowned in its roar the fierce execrations of the adversaries.

The accounts Gautier has given in this book are full of these reminiscences. The first performance of "Hernani" is the one shining mark in his life. It was the evening that settled his fate, the occasion on

which he definitely threw in his lot with the innovators; and although more than forty years had passed since that night, his enthusiasm was in no wise abated and his delight in the play was wholly undiminished.

It was therefore quite in accordance with the doctrines and the practice of that dramatic school to which he belonged, and of which he was one of the chiefest ornaments, that the last words he ever penned should have been about "Hernani," and that the old happiness should have returned to him at the very moment when his busy hand and fertile brain were stilled by death.

He had devoted himself to art, with such complete devotion that it has actually been made a reproach to him by some who cannot understand the circumstances under which Gautier became a Romanticist, and who fail to grasp the simple fact that the doctrine of art for art's sake was a necessary consequence of the sad condition into which such matters had fallen at that time. Faithful to art all his days, he found, as he says himself, that it was ever faithful to him and gave him a happiness he sought for elsewhere in vain.

Very touching too is the more than friendly feeling he has preserved towards all those who were comrades of his in the bygone days, all those who fought side by

side with him, who shared in the joys and in the troubles of the time, who were happy or wretched, but who were devoted like himself to the ideals set up by the master and accepted by the ardent disciples. Modest in all that regards himself, he is generous in his praise of his fellow-workers, and the friends of the survivors of whom he spoke in such tender terms must have been grateful indeed to him for the tributes he so willingly and lovingly laid on the new-made graves. There is a recurrence of the old friendly comradeship on every page of the work, and this lends to it a special value, beyond the interest it possesses as a memorial of a brilliant time and a tumultuous one, too, when such deep changes were being introduced not into French literature only, but into every form and manifestation of the artistic instinct and artistic powers of the nation.

The various portions of the volume were published at different times and in different papers. The first three chapters appeared in the *Bien public* of March 3, 10, and 17, 1872, and the chapter on "Hernani," left unfinished, was published in the same paper on November 6 of the same year. The various sketches of Romanticist celebrities, which are all connected with the history of the movement, were written for different

papers and at different dates between 1849 and 1870, while the study on the Progress of French Poetry since 1830 formed part of the Report on the Progress of Letters in France, to which Sylvestre de Sacy, Paul Féval, and Édouard Thierry also contributed. This portion was republished in 1874, under its present title, in the volume on the History of Romanticism.

A History of Romanticism

A HISTORY OF ROMANTICISM

I

THE FIRST MEETING

THERE are but a few veterans left of the men who, in answer to the call of Hernani's horn, followed him up the steep slopes of Romanticism and so valiantly defended the defiles against the attacks of the Classicists; and even these are disappearing day by day like the wearers of the Saint Helena medal. I had the honour of being enrolled in those youthful bands that fought for idealism, poesy, and freedom in art, with an enthusiasm, a bravery, and a devotion unknown nowadays. The glorious leader still stands like a statue upon its bronze pedestal, but the remembrance of the private soldiers will ere long be lost, and it is the duty

of those who formed part of the Grand Army of literature to relate their forgotten exploits.

It must be difficult for the present generation to imagine the state of excitement of all minds at that time. A movement analogous to that of the Renaissance was taking place. A sap of new life was running hotly; everything was germinating, budding, blooming at one and the same time; intoxicating scents filled the air, which itself went to the head; men were drunk with lyrism and art. It seemed as though the great lost secret had been found again; and it was, for Poetry had been lost and now was found.

It is impossible to realise the depth of insignificance and colourlessness literature had fallen into; and the case of painting was no better. David's latest pupils were engaged in smearing with sickly colouring the old Græco-Roman stock models. The Classicists professed admiration for these masterpieces, but could not repress a yawn as they looked upon them, though they did not, on that account, show themselves any the more tolerant of the artists of the new school, whom they called "tattooed savages" and accused of painting with "a drunken broom." Nor were their insults left unrequited, and "mummies" made up for "savages,"

while both sides entertained the most profound contempt for each other.

At that time my literary vocation had not asserted itself, and I should have been greatly surprised had any one told me I would become a journalist, for such a prospect would have had little attraction for me. I intended to be a painter, and, with this purpose in view, I had entered Rioult's studio, situated near the Protestant church in the Rue Saint-Antoine, and which its nearness to the Collège Charlemagne, where I was completing my education, made me prefer on account of the facility with which I could combine studio and school work. I have often since then regretted that I did not follow my first impulse.

A man sees for himself how much he has accomplished, and reality, ever severe, impresses upon him what is his exact value; but he may dream of how much more beautiful, grander, and magnificent work he might have been the author, for if the page has been written all over, the canvas has remained spotlessly white, and there is nothing to prevent one from supposing, like Frenhofer in Balzac's "The Unknown Masterpiece," that there shines upon it a Venus by the side of whom Titian's nude women would be but shapeless daubs.

It is an innocent illusion, a secret subterfuge of self-love which harms no one and is always a bit consoling, for it is ever comforting to say to one's self, when the brush has been discarded in favour of the pen, "What a great painter I should have made!" I can only hope that my readers will not share that opinion and wish that I had stuck to my original purpose.

Men read a great deal in the studios of that day. The students were fond of literature, and their special training leading them to close communion with nature, they were better fitted to appreciate the images and the rich colouring of the new poesy. They had not the least objection to the exact and picturesque details that were so repugnant to the Classicists, for accustomed to their own free speech, full of technical expressions, the crude word in nowise shocked them. I speak of the young and enthusiastic students, for of course there were docile grinds, faithful to Chompré's Dictionary and to the tendon of Achilles, who were well thought of by the professor and held up by him as examples to be followed; but they were not in the least popular, and glances of contempt were cast upon their palettes, on which glowed neither Veronese green, Indian yellow,

Smyrna lake, nor any of the seditious colours proscribed by the Institute.

Chateaubriand may be looked upon as the ancestor, or, if you prefer it, the Sachem of French Romanticism. In the "Genius of Christianity" he restored Gothic art; in "The Natchez" he opened up Nature, so long closed to art; in "René" he invented melancholy and modern passion. Unfortunately, his most poetic mind lacked the wings of poetry — verse. Victor Hugo did have these wings, and of vast spread of pinion, too, stretching from one end to the other of the lyrical heavens. He rose, soared, circled, and swept about with a freedom and a power that recalled the eagle's flight.

What a wonderful time that was! Walter Scott was then enjoying the full tide of success; men were studying the mysteries of Goethe's "Faust," which, to use Mme. de Staël's words, contains everything and even something more than that; Shakespeare was being discovered under the somewhat revised translation by Letourneur; and Lord Byron's poems, "The Corsair," "Lara," "The Giaour," "Manfred," "Beppo," "Don Juan," brought the East, not yet become commonplace, to us. It was all so youthful, so new, so richly

coloured, and of so strange and intoxicating a savour, that it turned our heads and we seemed to be entering into unknown worlds. On every page we came upon subjects for pictures which we made haste to sketch stealthily, for they were not to our master's taste, and would have earned for us, had they been seen, a smart rap of the mahl-stick over the head.

It was in this state of mind that I worked at the figure, while reciting to my neighbour at the easel "King John's Joust," or "The Burgrave's Hunt." My heart was with the Romanticist school, although I was not yet affiliated to it. The preface to "Cromwell" blazed before me like the Tables of the Law on Mount Sinai, and the arguments it contained appeared to me unanswerable. The insults hurled by the inferior papers of the Classicist press against the youthful master whom I even then, and rightly, looked upon as the greatest poet in France, filled me with fiercest rage. I burned to go forth to fight the hydra of old fogyism, like the German painters with Cornelius at their head, mounted on Pegasus, after the fashion of the four sons of Aymon in the fresco by Kaulbach, in the new Pinacothek in Munich. I

should, however, have preferred a less classical steed, Ariosto's hippogriff, for instance.

The rehearsals of "Hernani" were going on, and judging by the excitement already aroused by the play, it was easy to foresee that the first performances would be riotous. My dearest wish, my highest ambition was to be present at the battle, to fight unseen in some corner for the good cause; but the tickets were reported to be at the author's disposal, at least for the first three performances, and the idea of asking him for one struck me, an unknown student in a painter's studio, as altogether beyond the bounds of audacity.

Happily, Gérard de Nerval, with whom I had formed at the Collège Charlemagne one of those youthful friendships that are ended by death alone, happened to pay me one of the brief, unexpected calls he was in the habit of making, in the course of which, like a tame swallow entering by the window, he would flutter round the room, uttering little cries, and soon bolt out again; for his lightsome, winged nature, apparently borne up by the breezes, like Euphorion, the son of Helen and Faust, plainly suffered if obliged to remain still, and the best way to have a chat with him was to accompany him on his walk. At this time

he was already an important personage; fame had come to him while still in college. At seventeen he had had a volume of verse published, and on reading the translation of "Faust" made by that youth who was scarce more than a lad, the great man of Weimar had deigned to say that he had never so well understood his own work. Gérard was acquainted with Victor Hugo, was received at his house, and deservedly enjoyed the Master's confidence, for never was there a more refined, more devoted or more loyal man.

Gérard was charged with the duty of recruiting young fellows for that first evening's performance, which promised to be stormy, and was already arousing so much animosity. Was it not natural that youth should be opposed to old age, the long-haired heads to the bald ones, enthusiasm to routine, the future to the past?

He carried in his pockets, stuffed with more books, old volumes, pamphlets, and note-books — for he wrote as he walked — than were those of Colline in "Life in Bohemia," a lot of small squares of red paper stamped with a mysterious signature: a Spanish word, *Hierro*, which means "iron," inscribed on one corner. This motto, the Castilian haughtiness of which was un-

commonly well suited to Hernani's character, and which he might have borne, meant also that in the fight one must be frank, brave, and reliable as a sword.

I do not think I ever in the whole course of my life experienced such lively joy as when Gérard, taking from the package six of these red paper squares, handed them to me with a solemn air, urging me at the same time to bring trusted men only. I answered on my life for the small group, for the squad the command of which was given to me.

Among my fellow-students in the studio, were two ferocious Romanticists who would willingly have fed upon the body of a member of the Academy, and among my classmates at the Collège Charlemagne two young poets who were secretly cultivating rich rimes, exact expressions, and accurate metaphors, terrified the while lest these misdeeds should cause them to be disinherited by their parents. These four I enrolled, after exacting from them an oath to give no quarter to the Philistines; a cousin of mine completed the number of our little band, which, I need not say, behaved valiantly.

It is not, however, my intention to relate now the great battle round which a legend has already been

formed. It shall have a chapter to itself. I am of opinion that the frontispiece of this History of Romanticism, begun somewhat in chance fashion, for I have been led to recall these unforgettable memories by the revival of "Ruy Blas" (at the Odéon Theatre, February 19, 1872), should be the radiant figure of him, then quite young, to whom I said, as did Dante to Vergil, "Thou art my Master and my author," — with the features and the mien of those bygone days.

My "Hernani" record, thirty campaigns, thirty stormy performances, almost gave me the right to be presented to the great leader. It could easily be managed: Gérard de Nerval or Petrus Borel, whose acquaintance I had recently made, would either of them readily take me to the house, but at the thought I was filled with overpowering timidity, and dreaded the fulfilment of a wish so long caressed. When anything happened to prevent the meetings arranged with Gérard or Petrus, or both of them, for the purpose of presenting me, I felt renewed comfort, as if relieved of a burden, and I breathed freely again.

Victor Hugo had been compelled, owing to the number of visitors consequent on the performances of

"Hernani," to leave the peaceful retreat he dwelt in, at the back of a garden full of trees, in the Rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs, and had settled in a projected new street in the Francis I quarter, the Rue Jean-Goujon, which at that time had but one house, that occupied by the poet. All around stretched the almost desert Champs-Élysées, a solitude favourable to wanderings and meditations.

Twice I ascended the stairs slowly, — oh! so slowly, as if my boots had been soled with lead. I could not breathe, and I could hear my heart thumping in my breast, while a cold sweat came out on my temples. On reaching the door, and as I was about to pull the bell, I was seized with panicky terror. I turned round and bolted down the stairs four steps at a time, pursued by my acolytes, who were laughing fit to split their sides.

The third attempt was more successful. I had begged my companions to give me time to recover, and I had sat down upon the steps, for my legs were giving way and refused to bear my weight, when suddenly the door opened and in a blaze of light, like Phœbus and Apollo issuing from the gates of Dawn, there appeared on the dark landing Victor Hugo himself in all his glory!

Like Esther before Ahasuerus, I nearly fainted. Hugo could not extend towards me, as did the satrap to the lovely Jewess, his long golden sceptre, for the very good reason that he had no golden sceptre, whereat I wondered. He smiled, but did not seem surprised, accustomed as he was to meeting daily, as he took his walks abroad, poets in a fainting state, artist students blushing crimson or pale as death, and even grown men who remained speechless or able only to stammer a few words. With the most exquisite courtesy, he made me rise, and giving up his walk showed us the way into his study.

Heinrich Heine relates that intending to call upon the great Goethe, he had long rehearsed in his own mind the fine speeches he proposed to speak to him, but that once he was introduced into his presence the only thing that occurred to him was to say: "The plum trees on the road from Iena to Weimar bear plums that are excellent for the quenching of the thirst." Whereat the Jupiter-Mansuetus of German poetry had gently smiled, more flattered perhaps by this crazy piece of nonsense than he would have been by a set, coldly turned eulogy. My own eloquence did not reach beyond the bounds of dumbness, although I too had

often rehearsed, during long evenings, the lyrical apostrophes with which I had meant to greet Victor Hugo when I should meet him for the first time.

After I had somewhat recovered myself, I was able to take part in the conversation begun between Hugo, Gérard, and Petrus. Gods, kings, pretty women and great poets may be stared at more freely than other people without their being annoyed at it, and I examined Hugo with an intense admiration that did not appear to be unpleasant to him. He recognised the painter's glance taking notes in order to fix for ever a look, an appearance, a moment he desires not to forget.

In the Romanticist host as in the Army of Italy there were none but youths. Most of the privates were not even of age, and the oldest of the band was the commander-in-chief himself, then twenty-eight years old, which was the age of Bonaparte, and also that of Hugo when I met him.

I have written somewhere: "It is rare that a poet or an artist is known under his first and attractive aspect. Fame comes to him late, when already the fatigue of life, the long struggles and the tortures of passion have changed his original mien. It is a worn, withered mask he leaves behind him, marked by every

grief he has endured with a wound or a wrinkle as with stigmata. It is this last image of him, which has its own special beauty, that men remember." I have been fortunate enough to be acquainted with all the poets of the modern Pleiades, whose early looks are now forgot, in all the bloom of their youth, their beauty, and their charm.

What first struck one in Victor Hugo was the truly monumental brow that crowned his serious, placid face like a pediment of white marble. It had not, it is true, the proportions given it later by David d'Angers and other artists, with the object of accentuating in the poet's face the marks of genius, but it really was of superhuman beauty and breadth. The mightiest thoughts might be written upon it, and wreaths of gold and laurel rest upon it as upon the brow of a god or of a Cæsar. It bore the sign of power. It was framed in by somewhat long light brown hair. Hugo wore neither beard, mustaches, whiskers, nor tuft on the lower lip; his face, remarkably pale, was clean shaved. It was marked and illumined by two tawny eyes like the eyes of an eagle; the lips were sinuous, with arching corners, and firm and wilful in outline. When opened by a smile, they allowed dazzlingly white teeth to show. His

dress consisted of a black frock-coat, gray trousers, and a turned-down shirt-collar, a get-up at once most simple and correct. Indeed no one would have suspected this thorough gentleman of being the leader of the hairy, bearded bands that were the terror of the smooth-chinned bourgeois.

In this wise did Victor Hugo appear unto me at our first meeting, and his image has remained ineffaceable in my memory. I carefully preserve that handsome, youthful, smiling portrait of him, radiant with genius and surrounded with a halo of glory.

II

THE INNER CIRCLE

NOW that you have been presented with due ceremony to the chief of the school, who has received you with his usual graciousness and affability, would you like to meet a group of the disciples, every one filled with the most perfervid enthusiasm? Only, if you happen to admire Racine more than Shakespeare and Calderon, you had better keep the fact to yourself, for tolerance is not accounted a virtue by neophytes.

In a small room with not enough chairs for the guests, met a number of young fellows who were really young, and so far different from the younger men of to-day, who are all more or less over fifty. The hammock in which the owner of the place enjoyed his siesta, and the narrow couch on which dawn often surprised him as he reached the last page of a volume of verse, partially made up for the lack of seating facilities. The guests spoke more comfortably standing, and the

gestures of the orators or reciters gained in breadth. Of course it would not do to throw out the arm too far, or one would strike the sloping ceiling.

The room was poor, but its poverty was proud and not devoid of adornments. A multiple frame of varnished pine contained sketches by Eugène and Achille Devéria; near this frame a gilded one set off a head painted by Louis Boulanger after an original by Titian or Giorgione; it was painted on board, boldly, and was of splendid tone. On a portion of the wall a piece of Bohemian leather, which did not pretend to act the part of a hanging, displayed, for the delight of the painters, a ruddy shimmer of gold and changing tones in the dark corner.

The mantelpiece was adorned with two Rouen-ware jars, filled with flowers. A skull, that looked as if it might have been removed from the hand of one of Spagnoletto's Magdalens — so livid was the sunbeam that fell upon it — took the place of a clock. If it did not indicate the time, at least it made one reflect upon its irreparable flight. It was a translation into Romanticist verse of the symbolism of Horace's line.

The medallion portraits of the members, the work of Jehan du Seigneur — I beg you to note carefully the

"h," for it is characteristic of the times, — oiled in order to destroy the crude look of the plaster, to colour them, as smokers and sculptors say, were hung on either side of the mirror and in the window recess, where the light touched them in a way peculiarly favourable to the relief.

What has become of these medallions, the work of a hand now cold in death, from originals that have disappeared or few of whom, at least, still survive? No doubt these plaster portraits were broken in the rude handling consequent on the frequent moves in the course of the odysseys of adventurous lives, for at that time not one of us was rich enough to secure for that collection — that nowadays would be of such value, both as souvenirs and from the artistic point of view — such immortality as bronze bestows. But when endless youth opens up before one its boundless horizon, no one suspects that the present, one expends with such lavish hand, may some day be history, and thus many an interesting memento is lost by the wayside.

On a modest set of shelves of wild-cherry wood, hung by cords, shone, among a few choice volumes, a copy of "Cromwell," with a friendly dedication, signed V. H. The veneration of Protestants for the Bible,

or that of Mohammedans for the Koran did not surpass mine for that volume, which was indeed to me the book of books, the work that contained the true doctrine.

The assemblage generally comprised Gérard de Nerval, Jehan du Seigneur, Augustus MacKeat, Philothée O'Neddy (every man altered his name a bit in order to give it an air), Napoleon Tom, Joseph Bouchardy, Célestin Nanteuil; somewhat later, Théophile Gautier and a few more, and finally Petrus Borel himself. Of these young fellows, bound by the tenderest friendship, some were painters, others sculptors, others engravers, others architects or at least studying architecture. For myself, as I have already said, standing at the parting of the ways, I hesitated between the two paths, that is, between poetry and painting, both of them equally detested of parents.

Nevertheless, though I had not crossed the Rubicon, I was already making more verse than sketches; and it appeared to me to be pleasanter to paint with words than with colours. For one thing, when the sitting was over, one had not to clean up the palette and to wash one's brushes.

Nor was I the only one in the small company who suffered from uncertainty of vocation. Joseph Bou-

chardy, then unknown, was studying mezzotint engraving under the Englishman Reynolds, the engraver of the beautiful plate of Géricault's "The Wreck of the 'Medusa,'" but he felt himself irresistibly drawn towards the drama, and every one knows how fully success justified this imperious command of instinct. Bouchardy, "Saltpetre-heart," as Petrus called him in the preface to the "Rhapsodies," in which he has a word for every one of his comrades as he goes along, did not become a mezzotint engraver, though he studied the process thoroughly; he became the Shakespeare of the Boulevard, and one might say that in his works are to be met with the deep black tones of English engraving. Petrus was also seeking to find his proper career. From the architect's studio he had passed to that of Eugène Devéria, where he tried his hand at painting; but if I may use such a classical expression in a History of Romanticism, we suspected him even then of secretly courting the Muse. Gérard was the only man of letters among us, in the meaning the word had in the middle of the eighteenth century. He was subjective rather than objective; thought more of the idea than of the image; understood nature somewhat in the fashion of Jean-Jacques Rousseau; in his relations with mankind, cared

but little for paintings and statues; and, spite of his constant relations with Germany and his intimacy with Goethe, had remained far more French than any of us, in all the characteristics of race, temperament, and mind.

This interpenetration of poetry by art was and is still one of the characteristic traits of the new school, and explains why its first adherents were recruited from the ranks of the artists rather than those of the men of letters. Innumerable objects, images, and comparisons believed inexpressible in words, entered into our language and have remained in it. The scope of literature was enlarged, and now within its mighty compass it embraces the whole sphere of art.

Such, then, was my state of mind at that time; art attracted me by the seductive forms it offered me for the realisation of my dream of beauty, while the ascendency of the Master drew me in his luminous wake, and made me forget that to be a great poet is more difficult still than to be a great painter.

The impassible Goethe experienced a similar indecision in his attempts and efforts to assimilate a new form of expression, and in his Venetian epigrams he wrote: "I have tried many things; I have drawn a great deal, I have engraved on copper and painted in

oils; I have often also modelled in clay, but I lacked perseverance and learned nothing, accomplished nothing. In one art only have I become almost a master, the art of writing in German; and thus it comes about that, unfortunate poet, I am wasting life and art upon the most rebellious matter. What had fate meant to make of me? It is a rash question, for generally it does not intend to make much of most men. Was it a poet? It would have succeeded in doing so, had not our speech proved so utterly rebellious."

May I also, after so many years of labour and of researches in various directions, have become almost a master in one single art, that of writing in French! But such ambitions are forbidden me.

In every group there is a central individuality, round which the others cluster and gravitate like a planetary system around its sun. Petrus Borel was our sun; none of us sought to escape his attraction; as soon as a man had been caught in the whirl, he went on revolving with singular satisfaction, as if he had been obeying a natural law. He felt something of the intoxication of the whirling dervish spinning in the centre of his fustanella, that the rapidity of his waltzing causes to expand like a bell.

He was rather older than I, some three or four years older, perhaps, of medium stature, well made, with an elegant figure, and meant to wear a brown mantle in the streets of Seville. Not that he resembled an Almaviva or a Lindor; on the contrary, he was grave as a Castilian, and seemed always as though he had just emerged from one of Velasquez' paintings. When he put on his hat he seemed to be covering himself in the presence of the King, like a grandee of Spain; his lofty courtesy set him apart, but he never wounded other people's feelings, for he stopped just at the point when courtesy would have become either coldness or impertinence.

His was a face never to be forgotten, once seen. Young and serious, perfectly regular, of olive complexion, with faint amber tones like an old master's painting acquiring an agate surface, it was lighted by great eyes, shining and sad, the eyes of an Abencerrage thinking of Granada. The best description that I can give of these eyes of his is that they were exotic or nostalgic. His bright red lips bloomed like a flower under his mustaches, and imparted a spark of life to features Oriental in their immobility.

A beard, fine, silky, full, scented with benzoin, and

cared for as a Sultan's beard might be, framed in a dark shadow his pale and handsome face. A beard! A very ordinary matter in France nowadays, but at that time there were but two in the country: Eugène Devéria's and Petrus Borel's. It required absolutely heroic self-possession and contempt of the multitude to wear one. And mark that when I say beard, I do not mean mutton-chop or fin-shaped whiskers, or a tip or a tuft, but a genuine, full, complete beard, one to make a man shudder.

I, beardless one, with but a light mustache on the corners of my upper lip, I admired that splendid crop of hair. I must even confess that I, who had never coveted anything, did feel the meanest jealousy of it, and that I did my best to counterbalance its effect by a Merovingian superabundance of hair on my head. Petrus wore his short, almost cropped, so as to make his beard more striking still; in this direction, therefore, I had the chance of hitting upon something new, singular, and even somewhat scandalous.

The presence of Petrus Borel produced an indefinable impression, the cause of which I managed at last to discover. He was not a contemporary; nothing in him reminded one of a modern man; he seemed

always to be emerging from the past, and one could have sworn he had just bidden good-by to his ancestors. I have not met with a similar expression in any one else. It was difficult to take him for a Frenchman born in the nineteenth century, but quite easy, on the other hand, to believe him a Spaniard, an Arab, or an Italian of the fifteenth.

Thanks to his beard, his powerful yet gentle voice, and his dress, picturesquely worn, without, however, being too different from the fashion of the day, and always tastefully kept to sombre colours, Petrus Borel inspired me with exceeding awe, and I treated him with an amount of respect quite unusual between young fellows nearly of an age. He talked well, in a strange and paradoxical way, used words deliberately odd, and delivered his remarks with a certain rough eloquence. He had not yet taken to baying at the moon, and to sickening people. I thought him "remarkably clever," and had concluded that he would be the particular great man of our company. He was slowly elaborating the "Rhapsodies" in mysterious secrecy, intending that they should suddenly blaze forth like the lightning, and blind, or at least dazzle, the astounded bourgeoisie.

Until the day of their publication should dawn, Petrus, who was the most thorough specimen of the Romanticist idealist, and who might have posed for one of Byron's heroes, used to promenade around, followed by his train, admired of all, proud of his genius and his beauty, one end of his cloak thrown over his shoulder, and casting behind him a shadow on which it would not have been the part of prudence to step. How many a time, at the performances of "Hernani," I regretted that Borel was not playing the part of the bandit beloved of Doña Sol; for he would have admirably represented the mountain hawk, the hero of the Sierras, struggling against fate; and handsome indeed would he have looked, wearing the cloak, the green-sleeved jerkin, the red breeches, and the sombrero pulled down over his eyes!

III

THE INNER CIRCLE

A STRANGE figure also was Joseph Bouchardy. He did not look as if he had been born in France, but rather on the banks of the Indus or the Ganges, so dark and tawny was he. I know not what mysterious sun had browned his face, and had concentrated all its rays upon him after breaking through the mists above. All he needed, to look like the Maharajah of Lahore, was a dress of white muslin, a Cashmere shawl twisted around his head by way of turban, and a diamond nose-ring. When he had on his blue coat with gilt buttons, and his black and white checked waistcoat and trousers, he seemed to be disguised, like the dispossessed princes of British India, who may be seen wandering with disconsolate air on the London pavements. His hair, of a blue black, produced greenish tints as it fell on his golden temples. His eyes, like jet stars, shone black on the yellow sclerotic, and his face was framed in with a

light, downy, silky, fine beard, every hair of which might have been counted as in a Hindoo miniature. He looked infinitely more like a disciple of Calidaça or of King Soudraka, the poet with the elephant ears, than an enthusiastic pupil of Victor Hugo. So we sometimes used to poke fun at him, when it was time to go, by saying: "Maharajah, your Highness' palanquin is waiting, and the bearers are jolly well bored."

He was short, thin, supple, with the action of a black Javanese panther; his somewhat small head turned freely upon a long neck carelessly wrapped round with a white foulard cravat.

His barbaric and fierce mien was purely picturesque, and did not betoken the least inward trace of savagery. Never did there beat in man's breast a warmer, more tender, or more unselfish heart than that of this young tiger of the jungle. Besides, every one of us, though at bottom the best of fellows, loved to look like grim rufflers, if only to instil wholesome fear in the breasts of the bourgeois.

Like every member of our society, Bouchardy knew every line of Hugo's play, and could have recited "Hernani" from beginning to end; a performance that

then surprised no one, for we often performed the play ourselves, each man taking one of the parts, and, by Saint John d'Avila, no prompter was needed! He was, however, less of a lyrist than the rest of us, who were absolutely crazy about poetry, and, provided we were satisfied with the style, cared little enough for the subject itself. Bouchardy was very much taken up with play-writing, drawing up plans of imaginary dramas, blocking out scenes, arranging settings, creating innumerable vicissitudes, involving his characters in apparently inextricable situations, setting himself the task of finding a way out of them, keeping back his effects for three acts so as to bring them on at the exact moment, cutting masked doors in walls for the entrance of the expected personage, aud trap-doors in the floors for his exits.

He wrought out in advance, as if it were one of Anne Radcliffe's castles, the curious edifice in which his heroes and heroines were later on to meet, to love, to hate, to fight, to trap each other, to commit murders, or to marry; providing it with a donjon, turrets, subterranean dungeons, secret passages, winding stairs, vaulted halls, hiding-places in the thick walls, mortuary vaults, and chapels in the crypts. We used to charge him

with turning his plays into wooden models, and he would laugh, saying that it might well be the best thing to do.

Bouchardy had the artless yet complex temperament that led the workmen of the Middle Ages to intertwine the inextricable "forests" of the cathedrals, and to enclose in the cases of clocks the world of wheels, weights, counter-weights, springs, and pendulums that caused the sun, moon and stars, angels, the seasons, and the four apostles to move, and that occasionally even showed the time. In the drama, in which he gave proof of unquestionable power, it was the structural difficulties that delighted him above all things. The very fact that the plot of a play was simple made him condemn it as defective, and he strove to cram each act full of incidents, vicissitudes, and complications. When the Gaieté gave "The Bell-ringer of Saint Paul's," one of the greatest, most durable, and most profitable successes of the Boulevard drama, I was already on the staff of the *Presse*, and it fell to me to perform the difficult task of describing Bouchardy's masterpiece.

After writing nine columns I had got half-way through the first act only; so, Bouchardy being a neighbour of

mine, I went to him in order to have him guide me through the maze of events. After a couple of hours spent in marches and counter-marches, he owned to being as much puzzled as myself, for he had not his plan of the play at hand. I am bound to say that the golden-skinned and indigo-haired monster smiled with a certain amount of pride, and appeared to be flattered by the thought that a man might lose himself in his work just as in the catacombs, and seek in vain in the darkness for any exit. It would have afforded him much satisfaction to see me starve to death in it, but I refused to give him that pleasure, and returned to the light of day by breaking through the opaque vault at the point I had reached.

A few years later, in Spain, at Jaën, a grim, African-looking town still enclosed in the remains of Moorish walls with saw-like crenelations, and hills as tawny as a lion's skin, and where a man never dreams of going to purchase a bundle of pimento on the public square without his navaja in his belt and a carbine on his shoulder, I saw on a wall, between the parador and the cathedral, a huge poster bearing these words: *El campanero de San Pablo por el illustrissimo señor Don José Bouchardy.* Bouchardy's fame had crossed not only the Pyrenees,

but the Sierra Morena likewise, the range of mountains wherein Don Quixote imitated the penance of Amadis upon the Rock of Poverty, and where Sancho found Cardenio's valise by the dead mule. Now that fame was romantically blazing in Jaën, after a classical performance of "Merope." At Valladolid, I had come upon "Hernani," translated by Don Eugenio de Ochoa, bearing himself as proudly there as on the stage of the Rue Richelieu. The pupil was marching on before the master upon the roads of Spain, like a herald-at-arms.

At this time Bouchardy would never have dreamed of such success; he was still engraving in mezzotint under Reynolds. Save Gérard de Nerval, not one of us had made a name, but we felt as if borne by the wind towards a brilliant future. The only reproach we addressed to the coming author of "Gaspardo the Fisherman," "The Bell-ringer of Saint Paul's," "Christopher the Swede," "Longsword," and "Paris the Comedian," was that he did not write in verse, and indeed, that he did not write, properly speaking. Wholly devoted to dramatic combinations, he neglected his style, a rare occurrence in the Romanticist school, although many Classicists charged it with being ignorant of French.

Sculpture is assuredly of all the arts that one which lends itself least readily to the expression of the Romanticist idea. It seems to have received its final form from antiquity. Having been developed under an anthropomorphous religion, in which beauty deified was made immortal in marble and rose upon the altars, it attained a perfection that can never be surpassed. Never has the hymn of the human form been sung in nobler strophes; the splendid force of form shone with incomparable brilliancy during that period of Greek civilisation, the youth and springtime of human genius.

What can sculpture accomplish without the gods and heroes of mythology, which afford it, with plausible pretexts, the nude forms and the draperies which it needs, and which Romanticism proscribes, or at least did proscribe in those days of early fervour? Every sculptor is necessarily a Classicist; at bottom he always belongs to the religion of the Olympians, and cannot read without deep emotion Heinrich Heine's "Gods in Exile." I myself, thanks to my studies in plastics, cannot help regretting the ambrosial-haired Zeus relegated to the Isle of Pines in the Northern Ocean, Aphrodite imprisoned within the Venusberg, Ampelos

cellarer to a monastery, and Herakles bank-clerk in Hamburg.

Nevertheless, we did not lack sculptors who sought to introduce truth into idealism, and to get closer to the beauty of nature. David d'Angers, sung by Victor Hugo and Sainte-Beuve in admirable poems, produced his "Maiden at Botzaris' Tomb," his "Philopœmen," and his great monumental busts, as well as that most characteristic collection of medallions which forms, as it were, a complete iconography of the age. Antonin Moine, Préault, Maindron, Mlle. de Fauveau were one and all endeavouring to break the old moulds and to communicate to the clay or the wax the suppleness of life and the thrill of passion. In our own cænaculum, Jehan du Seigneur represented that austere art which will not yield to fancy, because, feeling itself looked at under every one of its aspects, it may not scamp or conceal anything. Honesty in sculpture has always been obligatory, and Jehan du Seigneur, so accurate, so conscientious, was not the man to fail in this respect.

Jehan du Seigneur — let me keep in his name Jean the mediæval "h" which made him so happy and led him to fancy that he wore the apron of Ervinus of

Steinbach, working at the carvings on the Strasburg minster — Jehan du Seigneur was a young fellow some twenty years of age; he certainly had barely attained his majority. He had a gentle look, modest and shy as a maiden's; he was short, but robust, as is generally the case with sculptors who are accustomed to struggle with matter. His dark-brown hair was parted on either side and dressed to a point above his forehead, like a flame that crowns genius, or the top-knot so characteristic of Louis-Philippe. This mode of dressing the hair, which would appear strange to-day, outlined a handsome white brow, glowing with light, and under it shone two velvety black eyes, bathed in the blue fluid of childhood and incomparably sweet. Light mustaches and a light tuft on the chin gave strength to the features, and the somewhat protruding lower jaw indicated tenacity of purpose. Du Seigneur himself, however, grieved unremittingly over the wondrous bloom of his complexion, which was literally of lilies and roses, according to the ancient classical formula.

At that time it was the fashion, in the Romanticist school, for a man to be wan, livid, greenish, and somewhat cadaverous, if possible, for thus did one attain

the fateful, Byronic, Giaour look of one devoured by passion and remorse. Tender-hearted women thought such a one interesting, and, feeling grieved at his approaching fate, abridged the time of waiting for the consummation of happiness in order that he might taste it while still in this world. But rosy health illumined his sweet and lovely face. It is not every one who can have the mien of a Ruthven.

In order to carry out the programme contained in his name, Jehan du Seigneur wore, instead of a waistcoat, a slashed doublet of black velvet, cut to a point, fitting closely and laced behind. It was no more ridiculous, after all, than the waistcoats cut open in heart shape down to the pit of the stomach, and fastened by a single button, that were recently the fashion. A jacket with broad velvet facings, and a very full cravat of taffeta, with a great bow, completed this carefully thought out costume, in which, as the very acme of Romanticist elegance, not a trace of linen was visible. The men of fifty of to-day, and even some who are older, may remember the jokes directed against the shirt-collar as symbolical of the grocer, the bourgeois, the Philistine, who, with their ears scraped by the triangle of starched linen, seemed to be them-

selves bringing their decapitated heads like bouquets done up in paper.

It took all Victor Hugo's Olympic majesty and the shudders of terror he inspired to carry off his small turned-down collar — a concession to Mrs. Grundy — and when the doors were closed, and no profane ones were present, this weakness of the great genius, which connected him with humanity and even with the bourgeoisie, was commented on sadly, and deep sighs welled up from our artistic breasts.

Meanwhile Jehan du Seigneur, instead of attempting a "Hercules on Mount Œta," was at work upon an "Orlando furioso" trying to break his bonds, a group of "Esmeralda giving water to Quasimodo," and a bust of Victor, as we called him among ourselves with that tender familiarity that disciples indulge in; while I, an apprentice poet, addressed to the young sculptor, already a master, the following, among many more verses which I shall not inflict upon the reader:—

"Then before the eyes of thine entranced soul, shimmering with gilt, vaporous in gauze, Such as thy heart sought her in Hugo's work, With her long hair wind-blown and curled, Slender-limbed, quick-footed, wasp-waisted, A true dream of the East, did Esmeralda pass.

"Roland the brave knight, who, with frothing lips, His brows bent, rolls his grim and fierce eyes, And on the sharp rocks he has uprooted, Naked, mad with love, his nostrils inflamed, Brings out the great bones of his mighty chest, And writhes with his enthralled limbs.

"Then the Homeric, Napoleonic head of Victor, our King! Nay, more: mine own, My Gérard's and Petrus Borel's too, And others that with swift finger, as thou goest, Thou makest live in wax or eke in clay — Enough, in times of old, to make man immortal!"

IV

THE MIRACULOUS COMRADE

JULES VABRE owes his fame to the announcement, on the cover of Petrus Borel's "Rhapsodies," of his "Essay on the Incommodiousness of Commodes," a work that never saw the light and may be included in catalogues of oddities with "The Poor Sapper," and Ernest Reyer's treatise "On the Influence of Fishes' tails upon the Undulations of the Sea." Nor has the following stanza of the odelet, addressed to him by Petrus, in these same "Rhapsodies" been forgotten: —

"Now in good sooth, Jules Vabre, Comrade miraculous, To the gaze fastidious Of the clean shaven bourgeois, Must we not crazy seem, In this world in which all men proper are! Must we not seem passing strange As our own sweet wills we follow?"

The truth is Jules Vabre might well have amazed bearded men even, had men worn beards in those days, for he was one of the most eccentric persons I can

remember. He did not sport his Romanticism like a plume, and did not affect any of the truculent airs so much in vogue in the school; his fair hair, already somewhat thinned on the forehead, was not very long, nor did his mustaches hang down upon his breast like those of the ancient Breton warriors, but his gray eyes sparkled with mischief, and innumerable little ironical wrinkles played at the corners of his lips, the sides of his nostrils, and the outer corners of his eyes. He often laughed to himself, like Chingachgook, the Mohican, at the comedies that went on in his brain, and when he spoke, one could see a procession of fatidical figures, making faces and cutting capers, bursting with laughter, putting out their tongues, and suddenly vanishing like Chinese shadow-pictures. A talk with him gave one exactly the same impression as glancing through Rabelais' "Comical Visions" does. It was absolutely crazy and deeply true, and his extravagant fantocchi lived the most intense life, now comical, now sorrowful.

He was a Romanticist, but a Rabelaisian also, and in the prescribed mingling of the grotesque and the serious, he was always inclined to make the former predominate. In the most serious and innocent way

he indulged in the wildest practical jokes and fooled the bourgeois with the coolness of Panurge. He also recalled Merckle, whom Goethe considered the most perfect type of Mephistopheles.

But what was the occupation of Jules Vabre, who has long since vanished, and has left no other trace of his passage here below than an ironical announcement of a book and his own name in a dedication? Was he poet, painter, sculptor, or composer? I do not know a single line of verse, a single picture, a single statue, a single sonata by him. He was an architect; there were many of them in the "Hernani" host, as sick of the five orders as I was of the three unities. When their ship was overdue, Vabre and his friend Petrus became clerks of works under some contractor, and settled themselves in the first fairly finished room, both to save rent and to enjoy playing at Robinson Crusoe in the very midst of civilisation.

Thus it was that I came upon them in a half-ruinous cellar in the Rue Fontaine-au-Roi, which, I suppose, they had undertaken to repair. The yard was filled with rubbish, consisting of beams, bricks, and stones, that greatly impeded my approach. Stumbling

over the stones and timber, I at last managed to reach the dwelling of my friends, guided by the occasional gleams of light that issued from the air-holes of the cellar. To them the place was a regular grotto in the island of San Juan Fernandez, and not by any means a cellar in the Rue Fontaine-au-Roi. I descended a few steps and beheld Petrus, pale and haughty, prouder than a Castilian noble, seated by a fire made of boards, while Vabre, kneeling and supporting himself with his hands, his cheeks swollen like those of classical Æolus, was blowing up the fire, thus producing the intermittence of light visible from outside. The group so formed, lighted as it was from below, and casting strong shadows, quaintly deformed by the arch of the vaulting, would have furnished Rembrandt, or even Norblin, had Rembrandt been too busy just then, with a subject for an effectively mysterious etching.

Under the ashes was cooking the supper of my two friends, whose sobriety surpassed that of hermits; the supper consisted of potatoes. "On Sundays, we have salt with them," said Jules Vabre, with an air of proud sensuality; for, after all, salt, like Diogenes' wooden cup, is a luxury; simple palates do not need

that stimulant, and a man can drink perfectly well out of the hollow of his hand.

Water drawn from the pump washed down this primitively simple meal, and my two friends were so constituted that they experienced a certain satisfaction in reducing themselves to the barest necessaries of life. The fewer one's needs, the easier it is to escape from the trammels of civilisation; in their cellar, they felt as free as if they had been on a desert island. On a shutter placed upon trestles were laid out the drawings and working-plans of the job, a package of cigarette paper almost used up, with its engraving of smugglers and its Catalonian motto: *Upa, mynions, alere!* a tobacco-pouch made out of the webbed foot of some sea-bird, and whence escaped, as golden hairs out of a net, a few bits of Maryland tobacco, too few, alas! to furnish material for a last cigarette.

At that time I had not yet taken to smoking, but I was already aware that there is no greater privation for men in the habit of gargling themselves with tobacco, than the lack of the weed. I had therefore brought a package of Maryland in the hope that my friends' pride would not take offence at so insignificant an offering. They were just the sort of fellows who, with

empty stomachs, always reply, when invited to share a meal, that they have just risen from table after indulging in a splendid dinner. They had had no smoke since the night before, however, and Petrus, opening the package, drew out some of the tobacco, rolled it under his thumb, the colour of burnished gold, in the small leaf of *papel de hilo*, lighted it at the candle stuck in the neck of an empty bottle, and put it to his lips with an unmistakable expression of enjoyment such as rarely showed on his stoical countenance. His great eyes, half Spanish, half Arab, flashed for an instant, a faint blush coloured his olive skin, jets of smoke shot out alternately from his nostrils and his lips, and ere long he disappeared within the encircling cloud, like Jupiter, the cloud-compeller. Needless to say that meanwhile Jules Vabre, the miraculous comrade, was engaged in doing precisely the same thing.

Now my reader may well inquire by what tenuous thread the worthy Jules Vabre is connected with the history of Romanticism, since, though he was a charming fellow, he has but the slightest claim to literary fame, not having, as I myself have owned, finished, or, indeed, even begun the "Essay on the Incommo-

diousness of Commodes," designed to be a work of transcendental cabinet-making.

Well, Jules Vabre loved Shakespeare, — loved him with a love that was excessive, even in a Romanticist cænaculum. Shakespeare was his god, his idol, his master passion, a phenomenon he could never quite familiarise himself with, and which filled him with ever renewed surprise. He thought of him by day, and dreamed of him by night, and like La Fontaine, who used to ask passers-by, "Have you read Baruch?" Vabre would not have hesitated to stop a man in the street to inquire whether he had read Shakespeare. The architect was wholly engrossed in and possessed by the poet. Finding that he did not know English well enough, Jules Vabre, undismayed by the prospect of hunger and want, left Paris for London, his sole object being to acquaint himself so thoroughly with his author's tongue that no fine shade of meaning should escape him. In his opinion, and he may have been right, in order to learn a foreign tongue thoroughly, it was first and foremost necessary to steep one's self in the atmosphere of the country, to give up one's ideas, to cease criticising, to yield implicitly to the local influences, to imitate the gestures, the manners, the appear-

ance of the natives as far as possible, to eat as they did, to drink the same drinks, — the system is plain.

Among other paradoxes he upheld that Latin tongues ought to be washed down with wine, and Anglo-Saxon with beer, and he maintained that for his part it was to stout and double stout that he owed his amazing progress; that drink, so essentially English, having enabled him to become intimate with the country, having suggested to him ideas unknown to the French, having given him new sensations, and revealed to him shades of interpretation hidden from every one else.

He had acquired an English soul, an English brain, an English exterior; he thought in English only, and never read French newspapers or books. Letters from his former home remained unopened on his table, for he would not allow anything to distract him in his preparation for his travels into the unknown lands of Shakespeare.

Such was his state of mind when, a number of years later, I came upon him — it was in 1843 or 1844 — in a tavern on High Holborn, where he had installed himself both for the sake of economy and in order to dine in a thorough English centre among good people

stuffed full of roast beef and ale, wholly devoid of ideas, and pretty nearly such as must have been the usual spectators at the "Globe," in front of which William Shakespeare had held horses in his youth.

His own appearance was altered. His fair mustache had fallen under the steel of a Sheffield razor, and he was as clean shaven as any of the fastidious bourgeois he made so much fun of formerly. The metamorphosis was complete, and I had before me a perfect British subject.

When he caught sight of me, his gray eyes sparkled, he shook my hand so energetically that had not my arm been solidly fastened to my shoulder, it would have remained in his grasp, and he began to talk to me with so pronounced an English accent that I could scarcely make out what he said.

"Well, my dear Vabre," said I, "if you still mean to translate Shakespeare, all you have to do now is to learn French."

"I shall set about it at once," replied he, struck more by the remark than by the joke it contained.

The miraculous comrade had long dreamt of a literary monument more enduring than brass, and wished to present the Romanticist school with a treasure it

still lacked, namely, a translation of Shakespeare absolutely true to the text, to the thought, and to the expression, reproducing the turn, the flow, and the movement of the sentences, bringing out the mingling of blank verse, rimed verse, and prose, fearlessly rendering euphuistic subtleties and coarse remarks alike, and reproducing the inward meaning of the English to an extent hitherto unapproached by any one. In a word, though poor, unknown, without means, at the cost of the bitterest hardships borne in silence, — for he was one of those men to whom starvation seems quite natural — he was preparing to carry out this gigantic work for which, since 1830, he had been making ready by persevering and conscientious study.

Vabre translated aloud to me, book in hand, passages from "Hamlet," "Othello," and "King Lear," with a local savour, an accuracy of expression, and a penetration of the meaning which made them sound wholly new to me. I also heard him explain — with a view to composing a ballet — to Carlotta Grisi, who was then dancing in London, "The Tempest" and "A Midsummer Night's Dream" in the most poetic and ingenious fashion. If the proposed ballets had been written, the parts of Miranda and Titania would

have been thoroughly understood by their lovely interpreter.

Long before Taine, as is proved by his paradox on the true way to learn English, Jules Vabre had invented or guessed at the theory of *milieux*, exactly as he had determined the true laws governing the translation of Shakespeare.

A few years ago there called upon me in my little hermitage in the Rue de Longchamps, a pale-faced gentleman, with very white hair, dressed in black and looking like a clergyman. It was Jules Vabre, who had not yet found a publisher for his translation, and who had returned to France in order to found an International School — I must beg to be forgiven for using this expression, for it did not then sound as badly as it does nowadays. He wanted to explain "Hernani" to the English, and "Macbeth" to the French. It annoyed him to see the English learning French out of "The Adventures of Telemachus," and the French studying English in the pages of the "Vicar of Wakefield."

Whether his venture proved successful or not, I do not know, for I never saw him after that call, though he promised to come again. I incline, however, to the

belief that the educational establishment was not more successful than the translation. Jules Vabre was born under an unlucky star, and treacherous fate, under the guise of ill luck, constantly pursued him. Is he dead, or is he alive? I know not, but if he is no more and there is a tombstone over his remains somewhere or other, there should be inscribed upon it, for sole epitaph: —

HE LOVED SHAKESPEARE,

just as on Thomas Hood's tombstone was cut: —

HE WROTE THE SONG OF THE SHIRT.

His whole life is contained in those words.

V

GRAZIANO

VERY often, while making the long trip from Neuilly to Paris, sedately perched on top of the bus, where one at least enjoys liberty to smoke a cigar and even a pipe, I used involuntarily to glance, shortly before reaching the great Place de l'Arc de l'Étoile, at a small, low house on the Avenue de la Grande-Armée, having a ground-floor only, half hidden in and breaking in upon the line of tall and handsome houses built since the days, already pretty distant, when the little building had been erected.

The tavern — for such it is — is in no respect interesting or picturesque in itself. It is smeared thickly over with a staring red, of a shade between that of blood and that of wine, recalling the neo-rosso antico of King Ludwig of Bavaria. The wonder is that the mean and wretched hovel has not long since been swept off the land, which has risen so greatly in value; it may be due to one of those instances of

ignorant and obstinate avarice not uncommon among small proprietors.

My glance never falls upon that red splash in the line of white houses, which reminds me of the splash of blood upon the white marble steps of the Alhambra in Regnault's painting, without awakening tender feelings in me and summoning back innumerable remembrances of my youth that call up an indulgent smile on my face saddened by maturity, for I am not certain that I am any more sensible now than I was in my salad days.

If the worthy bourgeois, easily known by his triangular shirt-collar, his gold-rimmed spectacles and his watch charms, by whose side I am sitting on top of the bus, had the least suspicion of the larks I indulged in within that place, he would withdraw in horror to the very end of the seat, and most probably request the conductor to stop the vehicle and allow him to alight. Pandore would submit such an interesting case to his police sergeant, and the latter would reply, with his customary wisdom, that the Statute of Limitations applies in this instance.

It was in 183–, at which time the Champs-Elysées had not the splendid and brilliant appearance they now present. Then solitude and shadow held possession

of the great waste spaces, and foul or sinister figures sneaked about under the trees where the light of the street-lamps did not reach. A few disreputable cafés stood in the centre of the square plots, the trees of which had long retained the marks of the teeth of the Ukraine horses. Small indeed was the number of houses that bordered the roadway, for there had not been any general migration in that direction.

The two domed lodges of the Barrière de l'Étoile, with their pillars, the courses of which were alternately of square and of round stones, still stood, and looked rather well in the perspective. The enclosing wall had not been pulled down, and the fortifications were not spoken of any more than was the Great Wall of China. The high-road to Neuilly, running to Courbevoie, was lined by trees more than by houses, and traversed waste fields or passed between boardings that rose on the lower sides of the road itself. On those dusty steppes shone, like a poppy on the edge of a suburban cornfield ravaged by the Sunday trippers of both sexes, the single tavern that then bore the name of the Petit Moulin Rouge, not to be confounded with the Grand Moulin Rouge in the Allée des Veuves,

from which it differed in respect of the installation, the food, and especially the company. None of the variously named lights o' love were to be met with there, not a single chorus girl or supernumerary in the ballet, not even any shop-girls. The army of mercenaries had not yet started upon its campaign; and besides, as Gérard de Nerval used to say, there were still love affairs in those days. It was worth hearing him say this in a tone of gallantry, purposely old-fashioned and recalling the refined ways of the good old times. It was a poem. Every man had in his own corner his Laura or his Beatrix to whom he dedicated his verse.

The installation of the Petit Moulin Rouge was of the simplest. A whitewashed room, the floor dusted over with yellow sand, a counter tinned over and laden with pewters and drinking measures, a sideboard furnished with the glazed, brightly coloured earthenware adorned with cocks, bouquets of cornflowers and poppies that is to be met with nowadays only in the poorest of country inns, tables and benches of wooden boards drawn from boats, formed the architecture, the furnishing, and the plenishing of the place. As for the silverware, it consisted simply of common iron

stuff, for Viscount Ruolz had not then discovered the way to plate German silver, and the mediæval coffer had not been reintroduced. The glassware did not come from Baccarat's, but it was of that thin, sparkling, ribbed glass in which the wine smiled in the bowl, as the refrain of the old drinking-songs hath it.

Behind the common room there was a room reserved for club dinners, and a private room, devoted to the better class of customers, which opened on to a small garden lying on a fairly steep slope, and in which were arbours and shrubberies where wine and beer were served, and even, to the more fastidious, Seltzer water and sparkling lemonade.

Through a half-opened door one could look into the kitchen, with its stew-pans like unto bucklers of old. In front of the range a man of high stature and senatorial port, wearing a white jacket, appeared to be sunk in thought, as if suffering from nostalgia. His nose was huge, but perfectly handsome and correct, of the sort that by its very dimensions seems to be a caricature of beauty. By this majestic nose and the fringe of black beard that framed in his pale face, long as a theatrical mask, he was easily recognised as a child

of Græcia Magna, — a thorough-bred and genuine Neapolitan.

The painters forthwith began to prowl round him, forgetting that they had come in to drink a pewter or two of beer, and were fetching their sketch-books out of their pockets in order to turn to account that superb model whom they would willingly have travelled as far as the Strada di Piedigrotta or the Strada di Mergellina to see, and whom, by extraordinary good luck, they came upon in the suburbs, in Neuilly, in front of the kitchener of a tavern that in no wise resembled a Neapolitan osteria. He good-naturedly accepted the admiration of the artists as a man accustomed to it; he assumed the pose indicated and knew how to stand, a rare thing indeed. He would have made an excellent model, but, like the Italian cook in Balzac's tale, "Gambara," he was devoted to his art; and his self-love, amusing to Northerners, was fully justified. He cooked for us macaroni au sughillo, with tomatoes that made us lick our chops, — sublime macaroni that he alone could duplicate.

Our first cænaculum had had Mother Suguet; our second owned Graziano, and very proud indeed were we of our Neapolitan, who cooked for poor Italian

workmen, delighted at finding in the suburban tavern the pastes and cheese of their native land. Not only did we put local colour into our sketches and paintings, we had it in our food. What more could the heart of man desire, and how very far ahead of Mother Suguet's stewed rabbits was Graziano's macaroni! Graziano, a name worthy of figuring among those of the Princess Negroni's guests.

He initiated us in succession into the delights of stufato, tagliarini, gnocehi. A golden rain of Parmesan seemed to fall upon our plates from heaven, as Jupiter fell in golden rain into Danaë's lap. These mad orgies, that caused me at the time to look uneasily at the wall, lest I should see there a handwriting in letters of fire, were pompously watered with cheap wines of Suresnes and Argenteuil, bearing the names of the most renowned brands. On the other hand, we were crowned with roses, and it might have been thought that, like the cardinals dining in the Papal vineyard, each guest had his coffin in the cloak-room.

These diversions, seasoned though they were with jokes, witticisms, puns, paradoxes, strange cries, and a dialogue recalling now that of Pluto's Banquet and

now that in Béroalde de Verville's "Way to Succeed," soon began to pall upon us and to strike us as being commonplace and lacking in the picturesque and the unexpected. For, in point of fact, there was nothing very Titanic in eating macaroni in a tavern, and the thunderbolts of heaven were not fetched from the celestial arsenal on that account. To give our entertainments a touch of piquancy and to warm them up properly, something risky, audacious, revolting, Byronic, Satanic, in a word, was needed.

We were all admirers of the young Lord Byron's pranks and nocturnal bacchanalian revels in Newstead Abbey, with his young friends in monks' gowns, the folds of which, as they opened, occasionally revealed fair feminine forms; those banquets in which was handed round, full of dark wine, a cup whiter than ivory, that rosy lips touched with a slight tremor, seemed to us the highest embodiment of dandyism, thanks to the absolute indifference exhibited in them to what terrifies man in general. It is true that we did not possess Newstead Abbey, with its long, shadowy cloisters, its swans gliding about on the silvery waters in the light of the moon, nor the lovely young sinners,

fair, dark, or red-haired, but we could certainly secure a skull, and Gérard de Nerval undertook to do so, his father, a retired army surgeon, having quite a fine anatomical collection.

The skull itself was that of a drum-major, killed at the battle of the Moskowa, and not that of a girl who had died of consumption, so Gérard told us. He further informed us that he had mounted it as a cup by means of a drawer handle fastened by a nut and screw-bolt. The skull was filled with wine, and handed round, each man putting it to his lips with more or less well-concealed repugnance.

"Waiter," cried one of the neophytes, endowed with excessive zeal, "fetch us brine from the ocean!"

"What for, my boy?" asked Jules Vabre.

"Is it not told of Han d'Islande that 'he drank the briny waters in the skulls of the dead'? Well, I mean to do as he did, and to drink his health. Nothing can be more Romanticist!"

Or more absurd, and I have been unable to resist making fun of it in the "Jeunes-France."

So it was in that little red house, O worthy Joseph Prudhomme, respectable pupil of Brard and Saint-

Omer, sworn court expert, that I, your peaceful companion on the top of the bus, used to drink out of a skull like a regular cannibal, through sheer bravado, and weariness and disgust of your solemn stupidity.

VI

CÉLESTIN NANTEUIL

IN the "Jeunes-France" there is a short tale written, if I remember right, to accompany in a Keepsake, or a landscape, rather, a wonderful English engraving representing Saint Sebald's Square in Nürnberg. At that time it was customary to ask of writers who had not yet got over the delight of seeing themselves in print, a few lines of prose or verse to serve as a text for the splendid illustrations by Robinson, Cousin, Finden, Westall, Roberts, and Prout. I had contributed in my turn, and my performance bore the title, "Elias Wildmanstadius, or the Mediæval Man." He was, so to speak, the genius of that Gothic city, — one of those belated beings who have missed coming into the world at the right time, and whom the angel charged with liberating souls does not release quickly enough. Elias ought to have been born in 1460. At that time he would have lived among his contemporaries; no one would have thought

him eccentric and he would have found everybody charming. Even nowadays is not Henry Leys, the Belgian painter, a striking example of a man come too late into the world? Is not his place set apart for him in the group that comprises Lucas von Leyden, Cranach, Wohlgemuth, Schoreel, and Albert Dürer? There is nothing modern about him, and it would be a grievous mistake to suppose that he is merely an imitator, a copyist of the Gothic painters. It is a case of transportation of times, of a soul born out of season, of anachronism; nothing more. These inexplicable reappearances of ancient motives cause lively surprise, and gain for such artists a reputation for originality. A man belonging to a vanished period reappears, after a long interval, with beliefs, prejudices, and tastes forgotten for more than a century, and recalling a remote civilisation.

Elias Wildmanstadius was the symbol of these revivals of the past, but he was by no means a creation of my fancy. He was suggested to me by one of my friends in the lesser cænaculum, Célestin Nanteuil, who might have been named "The Mediæval Youth."

He looked like one of the tall thurifer angels or players on the sackbut that dwell on the gables of

cathedrals, that had come down into the city amid the busy citizens, still wearing his nimbus stuck on his head by way of a hat, and wholly unconscious of the fact that it is not customary to wear an aureole on the street. In 1830 he was about eighteen or nineteen years of age; tall, slight, slender as a fluted pillar in a fifteenth-century nave, his curling hair not unlike the acanthus of the capitals. His spiritualistic figure seemed to lengthen out and to aspire towards heaven with increased ardour; his complexion was rosy and white; the azure of the Fiesole frescoes had furnished the blue for his eyes, and his aureole-gold hair seemed to have been painted with gold, hair by hair, by one of the miniaturists of the Middle Ages.

The line in Barbier's "Pianto," which so admirably describes Raphael, —

"A long haired, oval face on slender neck poised,"—

had not then been written, but once it was, it was constantly applied to Célestin Nanteuil. His angelic face betrayed none of the preoccupations of the age. It seemed as though, from the height of his Gothic pinnacle, he overlooked the modern city, soaring over the sea of roofs, watching the swirl of the blue smoke, the squares that looked like chess-boards, the streets

that appeared like saw-cuts in blocks of stone, and the passers-by no bigger than ants, but all faintly through the shadowing vapours, while from his aerial observatory, as from a stage-box, he beheld in all their details the rose windows, the belfries bristling with crockets, the kings, the patriarchs, the prophets, the saints, the various orders of angels, the whole of the monstrous host of demons and chimeras, with their talons, their scales, their teeth, their hideous wings; the serpents, the tarasques, the gargoyles, the asses' heads, the monkeys' faces, the whole of the strange bestiary of the Middle Ages.

Being fair as fair could be, his nascent beard showed only as silky white down upon his cheeks, like peach-bloom seen only in reflected light, and he had the characteristics of the undecided sex of supernatural beings, half youth, half girl. He was easily moved and easily startled, and blushed easily. His long blue frock-coat, buttoned across his chest and cut something after the fashion of a cassock, set off the somewhat awkward, but not inelegant grace of the shy young artist who must have been like the German neo-Christian painters, the pupils of Overbeck, who maintained in Rome the doctrine of primitive Catholic art.

It must not be supposed, however, that Célestin Nanteuil strove after the thin, emaciated style, simplified into nothingness, which Overbeck appears to consider the acme of religious art. He did not, through desire for mortification, restrict himself to gray, violet, or neutral tints. He did not believe that colour was wicked sensuality and a deceitful mirage. He was a thorough Romanticist, who loved the picturesque and colour, and who possessed in a marked degree the feeling for what was then called, for want of a better term, the Mediæval, though what was meant was perfectly clear, and comprised what was neither Greek nor Roman, but belonged to the period between the twelfth and the sixteenth centuries.

In his first attempts, Célestin Nanteuil drew and painted after the manner of an artist in stained glass. In order to obtain more intense tones, he made use of glass stained in fusion. Of these first attempts may be said, what one of Joseph Delorme's friends said of certain of the shorter ballads of Victor Hugo, such as "The Burgrave's Hunt," and "King John's Joust," that they were Gothic stained-glass windows. In these the breaking in of the rhythm is constantly visible as is the breaking in of the lead in the painting,

and it is impossible that it should be otherwise. In such short fanciful pieces the important thing is to attain the swing, the turn, the clerical, monkish, regal, lordly set of the figures and the brilliant colouring. It could not be better done, and the publication of the poet's ballads may help one to understand the artist's water-colours.

With wonderful facility of assimilation, Célestin had acquired the angular anatomy of armour, the extravagant cut of lambrequins, the fanciful or monstrous figures of blazonry, the flowered patterns of the blazoned skirts, the haughty port of the feudal barons, the modest air of the ladies of the manors, the hypocritical mien of the stout Carmelite friars, the sly glance of the youthful pages in particoloured hose, and in his backgrounds he cut the sky line with buildings bristling with towers, belfries, and cathedral spires that crouched amid their flying buttresses like black spiders squatting between their legs.

He was also particularly successful in setting the characters of a novel, a poem, or a drama in ornaments recalling Gothic reliquaries with triple pillars, ogee arches, canopied and bracketed niches, statuettes, figures, chimerical or symbolical animals, saints of either

sex upon a golden background which he invented as he wrought, for he had an inexhaustible fancy. He worked equally well with brush, pen, pencil, or knife. I have myself seen him, when trying to render the grain of an old wall, place a piece of tulle on the paper and dab umber through the meshes of the stuff. In this way he managed to get a coarser grain on his stonework than the roughest that Decamps painted. He could so thoroughly enter at will into the spirit or rather the feeling of old Gothic imagery that he turned out figures of Our Lady del Pilar in brocaded dalmatics, Mothers of Sorrows with the seven swords in their bosoms, and Saint Christophers bearing the Child Jesus on their shoulders as they leaned upon a palm tree, that were worthy of serving as models to the Byzantines of Épinal.

It was not through great research or severe study that he attained this talent, but through a similarity of temperament with that of the mediæval artists. He felt intuitively what he had never seen, and he could have sworn he had wandered about the tower-girt cities, and the walls with their look-outs, defended by donjons, and topped by churches with traceried spires in which he set foot for the first time. Like

Elias Wildmanstadius, he had missed his right time for coming into the world, but, more fortunate than he, he had managed, with the help of art, to create for himself surroundings that suited him, and to find contemporaries in the Romanticist school.

"Notre-Dame de Paris" was the object of his most fervent admiration, I need not say, and he drew from it suggestions for endless drawings and water-colours altogether novel and remarkable. Nothing less resembled the cheap, sentimental Romanticism that flourished about the year 1825. One of the greatest services the Romanticist school rendered to art was ridding it of this spurious stuff, and Célestin Nanteuil may well claim a large share of the honour. With an ingenuous, almost childish air, he was possessed of the finest and the best wit, and poets loved to take him for a confidant. He was one of the favourites of the Master, who enjoyed his company, and occasionally carried him off on his short excursions. He had fought heroically in every one of the great battles of Romanticism, but he indulged in no illusions as to the outcome. He felt the growing animosity on the one hand, and, on the other, failing enthusiasm, and mediocrity delighted at having its revenge against genius.

The success of "Lucrece" was praised extravagantly in order to make more striking the failure of Victor Hugo's next drama, that was soon to be produced. Troubled about the fate of the "Burgraves," Vacquerie and Meurice went to Célestin Nanteuil and asked him for three or four hundred Spartans ready to do or die rather than allow the barbarian host to cross the Thermopylæ. Nanteuil shook his long, curled and ringleted hair with an air of profoundest melancholy, and with a sigh replied to Vacquerie, who had been the spokesman: "Young man, go and tell your master that there are no more youth. I cannot find the three hundred young men."

Many years had elapsed since the splendid nights of "Hernani," when the whole of youth seemed to be rushing unanimously towards the future, intoxicated with enthusiasm and poetry, and expecting to gather for itself the palms it was fighting to secure for another. The Master's talent had gone on growing; his genius had developed and assumed Titanic proportions; he had attained to sublimity in the Æschylus-like trilogy of "Job the Accursed," that Prometheus of the Rhine, whose Caucasus was the Taurus, and whose Jupiter was Frederic Barbarossa.

It was a piece of refinement, in those days, for Romanticist editions to be adorned with a vignette, a frontispiece, or an etching by Célestin Nanteuil. The existence of the illustration now greatly increases the value of a copy of a book, and bibliophiles eagerly seek out the volumes that contain them. Célestin's compositions were set in a number of small frames round the main subject, and contained incidents drawn from the tale or poem. They are artistic etchings dashed off without the minute precautions of professionals. One of the rarest of these vignettes is the frontispiece to "Albertus, or The Soul and Sin," which recalls the mysterious drawings and the strange fantastic effects Rembrandt loves. Alphonse Royer's "Venezia la bella" is illustrated with a view of the Piazza San Marco, taken from the sea, with the regulation gondola and murdered girl.

It is impossible to reckon the number of cuts, drawings, compositions, woodcuts for illustrated works, lithographs, and head-pieces for songs turned out by Célestin Nanteuil. A terrible waste of talent, but, on the other hand, inexhaustible wealth of fancy. Is it not using one's talent generously to meet all wants, to satisfy all fancies, to suit the ever changing fashions of

the day, and to be withal a delightful painter, a clever and delicate colourist who only lacked time in which to paint, as we poets only lack time in which to write verse? It is true that people do not think as highly of you as of a learned ass who spends ten years in producing a single daub.

Although compelled by the necessities of life to mingle somewhat with the Philistines, to emerge from the old Gothic city where the streets still show pepper-pot turrets at the corners, and to walk along the broad pavements of Haussmann's rectilineal perspectives, he still loves houses with projecting stories, with pointed or dentelated gables, with painted and carved beams, with diamond-paned windows set in lead, and old furniture of shining oak. Like Elias Wildmanstadius, he keeps on dreaming of the past in Dijon, where he is the director of the Art School, and where he can study at his leisure the wondrous spire, the cathedral, and the donjon of the old Ducal Palace, the while repeating with Gaspard de la Nuit: —

> " A Gothic donjon
> Like Gothic spire
> In a scenic sky,
> Below is Dijon.

Its laughing vines
Have compeers none ;
Its spires of yore
Were half a score.
There many a stoup
Is painted or carved ;
And many a portal
Fan-like stands open.
Long may'st thou live, Dijon !
While my flat nose
Sings of thy mustard
And thy bell-striker."

Dijon has been very hospitable to Romanticist painters. Louis Boulanger, the painter of "Mazeppa," "The Witches' Sabbath," "The Massacre of Saint Bartholomew," the friend of Victor Hugo, whose name figures in "Les Orientales," the "Autumn Leaves," and "Sunbeams and Shadows," is dying there in the shadow of the school he directed, and Célestin Nanteuil is turning his leisure to account to work.

VII

OTHER MEDALLIONS— PHILOTHÉE O'NEDDY

VERY few people now remember Philothée O'Neddy, whose pseudonym is but the anagram of his name. I shall not reveal the latter; the poet having thought fit to conceal his face, I shall not undo the cords of his mask.

Philothée O'Neddy enjoyed a brief notoriety about the year 1838. He surprised people; as painters put it, he fired a pistol in the cellar and the flash was noticed. But he did not take advantage of the attention he had excited; after having stood the fire of the redoubt, his hand upon the enemy's flagstaff, he remained for a moment standing amid the smoke of battle, and then quietly went down to the bottom of the conquered wall, careless of his success. Little by little he allowed himself to be forgotten, and the path that led to his literary threshold soon disappeared under brambles, moss, and parasitical vegetation. A secret grief more

or less manfully borne, the profound fatigue that in the case of some young poets follows upon a too violent intellectual effort, the discord between the ideal and the reality, perhaps also regret for certain pieces of audacity, had strewn their gray ashes over the author of "Fire and Flame." He had withdrawn from the lesser cænaculum where he had been wont to discourse and to blaze, and all trace of him had been lost, as is too often the case in the days of dispersion, when fall the dream-Babels raised by companions in beliefs at the happy age of twenty.

In respect of his years, he was my contemporary, that is, he had attained his majority after 1830. In the Romanticist school, we were all precocious and might every one of us have inscribed upon our first volume of verse: "Poems of a Minor," like Lord Byron.

At the time that Philothée O'Neddy frequented Petrus' cellar and Jehan's place — the young sculptor had set up his studio in a fruit shop at the corner of the Rue Vaugirard — he was a young fellow whose peculiarity was that he had the complexion of a mulatto, and thick, fair, wavy hair like a Scandinavian. His eyes were light blue, and his short sight made them

project; his lips were heavy, red, and sensual; his general appearance was African, and had won for him the appellation of Othello.

Who his Desdemona might be, no one knew, and it was absolutely certain that he had no Iago, for our whole company loved him. He never left off his eye-glasses; he slept with them on, for without them, he used to say, he could not make out his dreams clearly and thus lost the enchantments of night; the poetic spells of the sylphs, the alluring charms of the graceful vampires that haunt the dreams of youth, were lost in a faint mist.

One and the same characteristic is common to all the early works of that period: overflowing lyricism and striving after passion. The main points of the programme which every man endeavoured to carry out to the best of his ability, the ideals and the secret desires of the Romanticist youth, were to freely develop every caprice of thought, even if it offended taste, conventionality, and rule; to hate and repel to the utmost of one's power the profane vulgar, as Horace called it, the grocers, Philistines, or bourgeois, as the mustachioed and long-haired young painter students named them; to celebrate love in terms that might set fire to the

paper on which one wrote; to set it up as the sole end and sole means of happiness, and to sanctify and deify Art, which was to be upheld as a second Creator.

No one more than Philothée O'Neddy exhibited these characteristics of extravagance and tension. The expression "paroxyst," first employed by Nestor Roqueplan, seemed to have been invented specially for Philothée. In all he did the tone was excessive, the colouring exaggerated and violent, the utmost bounds of expression reached, the very originality aggressive, and the whole almost dripping with incredibility, as Xavier Aubryet used to say. Nevertheless, the feeling for the poetic period and the harmony of rhythm made itself felt through the absurd paradoxes, the sophistical maxims, the incoherent metaphors, the turgid hyperbolæ and the six-foot words.

Philothée was a metrical writer; he knew how to fashion a line on the anvil, and when he had drawn from the fire the incandescent Alexandrine, he could give it, amid a shower of sparks, the form he wished by means of his heavy and persevering hammering. Had he not retired so early, he would unquestionably have made a name for himself in the sacred battalion. He

possessed force, a quality seldom met with in artists, but at the very outset he lost courage through a weariness the secret of which remains hidden in the breast, and even more frequently, in the heart of the poet. To attain the end he sought, he would have had to work much harder.

"Enthusiasm and study, love and poesy, In your vast ambrosial sea Our souls of fire in ecstasy Should lose themselves! In you, endowed with wondrous genius, Giving birth to purest happiness, I should be an artist greater than God himself!"

I once owned a copy of "Fire and Flame" with an autograph dedication by the author; but I have it not now. Have you ever noticed that curious books, that have become rare, have legs, like the little boats concerning which the child consulted his father? They plainly have, else they would not scuttle about, but would remain quietly on the shelf in the library where they have been carefully placed between two well-bound volumes of high morality. When the selections drawn from one of Charles Asselineau's small Romanticist collection fall into my hands, I am filled with bitterest regrets. Every one of these books now so rare, so hard to find, so precious, that fetch such high

prices at auction, I could have had for nothing, with the etching, the woodcut, the portrait, the ornamental letter, or whatever constitutes the bibliophile's delight in his innocent pursuit and inspires him with such sweet emotions. I could have owned those *princeps* editions, the authoritative ones, revised by the authors themselves. They would have come one after another to take their place behind the glass of my shelves; locked up, however, now, since there are honest people who steal books. Unfortunately it is too late; most of my friends are dead, the editions have long been out of print, and here I am writing "A History of Romanticism," a movement in which I have played a small part, without possessing a single one of these books, though every one bore, as a safeguard, the master's sacred name.

Some five or six years ago, — though it seems an age, so many things have happened since, — Célestin Nanteuil was appointed Director of the Art School at Dijon, as I stated when speaking of him. This appointment secured for the brave and courageous artist, worn out by a life too well filled with labour, or drudgery rather, a chance to enjoy leisure in which real painting might find room; so there was no reason why we

should be sad, and yet we all were, — it was Nanteuil's *hoc erat in votis*, — and we resolved to celebrate his honours by giving him a dinner.

The old bands of "Hernani" and "Lucrezia Borgia," every one who had fought the Classicist hydra with its hundred bewigged heads, either on the stage or at meetings of hanging committees, the few that had been faithful to the "Roi s'amuse," and the "Burgraves," the old studio chums, and the young pupils also, nay, even some who were believed to be lost to art and to have passed over to the ranks of the Philistines, assembled from all parts of the land and met in a restaurant at the corner of the Rue du Sentier. When every one had arrived and the roll had been called, one of us who knew "Hernani" well, having fought at thirty-two pitched performances, declaimed the following lines : —

> "Call not for their powerless swords :
> For every man you summon, sixty attend me.
> Sixty ! every one worth the four of you !
> So, let us settle our quarrel here together."

It was long since such a Romanticist agape had been held. One would have had to go back to the days when, for lack of the salt sea wave, we drank cheap

wine at the Moulin Rouge in the skulls of the dead; but many a year had elapsed since then. Snow had fallen upon the mountain tops; pepper and salt had mingled in our beards; noses had become red, the smooth cheeks of yore had wrinkles, and in some of the guests, whom I had not met for a long time, I could perceive the shadow of their youth. I looked somewhat anxiously at my fellow-guests, and I said to myself: "Do I produce the same effect upon them? Do I seem as ugly to them, as old, as morose as they appear to me? Is this, then, all that is left of the brilliant band of 'Hernani' that so cleverly took the bull by the horns and worried the public? How desperately weary of life they look, and how little eager to leap the barriers!"

So the dinner began sadly, as do all entertainments. These valiant fellows, once so fierce, would not even have torn in pieces a member of the Academy or of the Institute. At last the ice was broken; the wine stirred up the hearts; the memories of the old days came back, sweet and charming; we talked of the happy times of poverty when we fed on glory and love. Was there ever better fare? We mingled in our talks then, like devotees of the same god, lines known by

every one, like the responses of a litany. We were young, handsome, proud, full of enthusiasm.

In a corner, between two of Nanteuil's comrades, I saw, towards the end of dinner, when men were beginning to leave their seats to go and talk with a friend at the other end of the table, a man whose appearance was familiar to me. It was Philothée O'Neddy, who had emerged from the catacombs of the mysterious life into which he had disappeared, in order to come and drink a stirrup cup with his friend Célestin Nanteuil on his way to Dijon, instead of to San Jago di Compostello, as he had intended. His hair was still wavy, but sprinkled with silver, and the mark made by his eye-glasses upon his nose had become so deep with time that the glasses stuck in it of themselves.

"Well," said I, going up to him and shaking his hand, "when will your second volume of verse appear?"

He gazed at me with his watery, frightened blue eyes, and answered with a sigh: —

"When there are no more bourgeois."

VIII

GÉRARD DE NERVAL

I HAVE not yet spoken of Gérard, good old Gérard, as we used to call him in our little company, and never did man better deserve the title. Kindness streamed from him as light from a luminous body; it was always visible and formed a special atmosphere round him. It really seemed as if it were placing Gérard under an obligation to ask him a favour; he thanked you for having thought of him, and at once started off, going from the Arc de l'Étoile to the Bastille, or from the Pantheon to the Batignolles, in order to offer to some newspaper editor a penniless friend's article, or to find out the reason why the accepted article had not long since been published. He walked with a step as light as an ostrich's, borne off the ground at every step, and which an Arab horse finds it difficult to keep up with. He was not a sedentary man; if he was shut up between four walls, with a desk in front of him, his inspiration vanished and his

thought died. He was an ambulatory writer, like Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Restif de la Bretonne, and he wasted no time on his trips, every one of which had for object the doing of a service to a comrade or a friend.

He worked as he walked, and from time to time stopped short and hunted in his capacious pockets for a note-book, made of a few sheets sewn together, on which he wrote down a thought, a sentence, a word, a reminiscence, a sign understood of himself alone, then shut the book up and started off again as fast as before. That was the way in which he composed. More than once I have heard him wish that he could travel through life along an endless band of paper that should roll itself up behind him, and upon which he would note the thoughts that occurred to him, so that at the end of his road they would form a single volume with a single line. His mind was like an apodal swallow; he was all wings and had no feet, or at most a scarcely perceptible claw by which he could hang on for a moment while taking breath. He came and went, made abrupt zigzags with unexpected turns, ascended, descended, rose again, soared and moved in the atmosphere with the joyous freedom of a being

in its own element. It was not restless mobility, frivolous lightsomeness, fantastic hopping about, but natural agility and the power to float and rise.

At times he might be seen at a street corner, hat in hand, in a sort of ecstasy, plainly away from the place where stood his body, his eyes shining like blue stars, his light, fair hair, already somewhat thin, forming a sort of golden mist upon his porcelain brow, the most perfectly shaped cup that ever held a human brain, as he climbed the spiral stairs of some mental tower of Babel. When I came upon him thus occupied, I was always careful not to accost him abruptly, lest I should cause him to fall from the heights of his reverie like a somnambulist suddenly awakened as he walks with closed eyes upon the edge of a roof. I used to stand in the line of his gaze, giving him time to return from the depths of his dream, and waiting until his eye should fall upon me of itself, when, apparently at least, he quickly enough returned to the reality of life with a friendly or a witty remark.

The Gérard of these early years was not very like the Gérard whom most writers of to-day have met at Le Peletier's Divan. Then the future smiled upon

him, and he knew no other misfortune than the refusals of theatrical managers, who declined to put on the plays of an unknown youth, though they received them with hypocritical welcome, and drew down upon themselves in consequence, in the preface to Petrus Borel's "Rhapsodies," the following sharp reprimand : —

"Here is to you, good old Gérard! When will the managers, the excisemen of literature, allow your works, so handsomely welcomed by their private committees, to reach the committee of the public?"

At that time he had not met the snail carrying its lump of earth on the Syrian roads, which struck him as an omen full of evil, nor the hideous tame crow, the companion of the poor people from whom he accepted a cup of wine on the passage from Beirut to Saint Jean d'Acre, and which he looked upon as a messenger of woe sent him direct by fate. A tame crow was croaking and flapping its wings in the Rue de la Vieille-Lanterne also, on the landing-place of the filthy stairs, snow-spotted, close to the dread bars, and perhaps as he was dying poor Gérard de Nerval, by one of those swift returns of memory that so frequently occur at times of crisis, remembered the crow he had seen

on the vessel's deck and that fascinated him with its ominous stare.

But at the time of which I am speaking not a single black cloud lowered on the dawn of his life, and it was impossible to note the germs of future disaster. No fortune teller who might have predicted his dismal fate would have been believed, as he traced in the distance the fatal rope, tenuous as a cobweb.

Let us, however, peacefully enjoy the cloudless dawn, and come back to the Gérard of those days whose name was not Gérard de Nerval, but Labrunie. Like Stendhal, he loved to conceal his individuality under various pseudonyms; once he ascertained that he had been recognised under one of his false noses, he would cast it away and put on another mask and another domino. He signed his writings "Fritz," "Aloysius," or with other names, and it is difficult now to make out his works in the dusty catacombs of journalism. Just as much as I courted notoriety did he seek the softened tints of half-light. I should have liked to march through the streets preceded by negro kettle-drummers and "followed by a hundred buglers blowing a blast," but if he heard his name spoken, he disappeared at

once. Popular papers, with a large circulation and a great literary reputation, endeavoured to get him on their staffs or to obtain articles from him. He preferred to bury his writings in some obscure sheet, that paid little and had but a scant subscription-list, just as if it pleased him to have no readers, — a curious kind of pleasure, but which one can understand in the case of certain proud and refined minds that are as much shocked by blundering praise as by coarse criticism.

In those eccentric days when every man sought to make his mark by peculiarities of dress, soft felt Rubens hats, velvet cloaks with the end thrown over the shoulder, Van Dyck doublets, frogged jackets, Hungarian braided coats, or other exotic garments, Gérard dressed in the simplest, least noticeable manner, like a man who desires to mingle with the crowd without attracting attention. In summer, he wore black alpaca suits, and in winter a dark blue overcoat carefully made like everybody else's. It may be that he did not wish to be known, and

Digito monstrari et diceri : hic est,

until he should be worthy of fame and he had attained so close to his ideal as to bear being confronted with it without having to blush.

I do not know why Gérard always had the reputation of being the laziest of men. Other men have been treated to a similar reputation though they have worked hard all their lives and their works might furnish a pyre for them. On the contrary, the star-gazer, the butterfly hunter, the blower of soap-bubbles, the so-called idler led the most active intellectual life. Under his outward calm, he lived in the fiercest of mental effervescence. It is to this period of his life that belongs the "Laforêt," in which he described Molière at home, with the brave and sensible servant whom he did not disdain to consult, thinking her advice better than that of the Lysidas, the Dorantes, and other wits of the Court and the town. It was a pasticcio in Molière's style, wrought out with thorough knowledge of the speech, the style, and the turns of expression of that seventeenth century so completely unknown to the modern Classicists who swear by it. The whole piece was wrought out in a scale of harmoniously dull tones such as time gives to old tapestry. I do not know what became of this play, which, unless my memory plays me false, had been accepted by the Odéon.

Nor is it known in what drawer, the key of which has long been lost, in what trunk gone astray, or in

what rat-haunted attic fetched up, after many vicissitudes, the "Prince of Fools," one of the cleverest and most successful imitations of the great "Devil plays" of the Middle Ages. The "Prince of Fools" — which treated of a company of jugglers who made their way, under the pretext of giving a performance, into a feudal castle for the purpose of rescuing a fair lady held in durance vile by a tyrannical husband or father — contained a play within a play, like those ivory balls which the patient Chinese carve, one out of another. It was a mystery after the Gothic manner, and its setting consisted of a blazing mouth of Hell, surmounted by a Paradise of starry azure. An angel who descended from the azure sphere threw dice with the devil, the latter staking souls, the former, I forget what. The angel cheated, through excess of zeal, and with the object of taking back as many of his friends into Paradise as he could. The devil lost his temper and called the angel "great gawky fellow, sly fowl," and threatened, if he caught him again at his tricks, to pull every feather out of his wings, so that he would be unable to fly back to his Master. The quarrel grew bitter, and led to a row, under cover of which the lover, protected by the Prince of Fools,

succeeded in carrying off his lady fair. The mystery was written in octosyllabic verse, like the ancient mysteries.

The "Prince of Fools" was preceded by a prologue, composed by me, and intended to prepare the public for the strangeness of the spectacle; for plays in the style of the "Great Devil Play of Douai" and the "Estates of Death" were scarcely in the taste of the day. I had even added to the manuscript a coloured drawing representing the mouth of Hell with affected Gothic naïveté. I mention this for the benefit of my dear friend and colleague Charles Asselineau, the Lindhurst of Romanticism, who is engaged in rescuing from oblivion all those books with strange illustrations and characteristic typography, which he catalogues, describes, and adorns with all the enthusiastic minuteness of a true bibliophile.

Asselineau, like every refined being endowed by heaven with a pretty hobby, has his black tulip, his blue dahlia, his desideratum: he would like to possess the original manuscript of the "Prince of Fools." It is a vain ambition, an ideal that can never be realised. Yet he has sought it for many years, hoping and despairing, clinging to the faintest indication, moving

mountains of papers, rummaging in the dusty collections in theatres, the resting-place of failures. But ever in vain; the undiscoverable manuscript flees before him in his obstinate pursuit — it flees without even showing up once.

The manuscript of the "Prince of Fools," unless some ignorant cook used it to burn off a chicken, was of oblong form and written upon blue paper that must have turned yellow with age. It was written throughout in Gérard's own neat, fine, well-ordered hand, with a broad margin on either side for the better setting off and airing of the verse. The prologue is in my handwriting, but that does not create a contrast, for our hands were twin as were our hearts, and they were so alike that they were mistaken the one for the other.

That is all I can tell Asselineau, who will, I hope, come upon his blue dahlia, the symbol of eternal desire, which it is perhaps better never to come upon.

All the thoughts of youth were turned to the stage, the luminous centre towards which converged the most diverse forms of attention, from the most serious to the most frivolous, — the stage, in front of which woman, dressed as if for a tourney, listens, claps her white gloved hands, seems to understand, to judge, and to

award the palm. The press had not then begun to publish daily an instalment of a novel, so that the stage was the only tribune from which a poet could exhibit himself to the crowd, with the consequence that many a drama was written in our cænaculum.

It goes without saying that they were invariably refused. Nevertheless, I found it difficult to believe that they were absolutely bad, and I regretted the loss of a drama in verse by de Nerval, "The Lady of Carouge," to which I had largely collaborated, and which at least contained an original idea. It was the story of an Arab or Saracen Emir, brought back from Palestine by a crusading baron, and who had fallen in love with his captor's wife. The contrast between Islamism and Christianity, between the tent of the nomad and the feudal donjon, between the coldness of the North and the fiery passions of the desert, between savage ferocity and chivalry, expressed in verse that lacked neither vigour nor beauty, and certainly not technical skill at least, for Victor Hugo's pupils know how to write verse, seemed to me suited to bring out some dramatic situations. Such was the opinion of Alexandre Dumas, who, five or six years later, wrote on this subject, which Gérard de Nerval had no doubt

told him of, "Charles VII. among his great Vassals." Only, in our case Yacoub bore the name of Hafiz. I considered it quite an honour that a character of my invention should have been thought worthy of being put on the stage and of serving as the pivotal figure in a drama by the author of "Henry III." and of "Christina at Fontainebleau."

To be done with the works of youth now lost, let me mention a drama drawn from Byron's touching and most pathetic poem, "Parisina," by Augustus MacKeat, Gérard, and myself. I remember it in the distant depths of that past as containing remarkable passages. Take it that these were the work of my collaborators, so that my modesty may not suffer over much, and you will be in the right. Maquet proved that he thoroughly understood the stage. I claim for myself but a few well-turned tirades, and you may take my word that they were so, although the work has been destroyed and the proof is not forthcoming.

Besides all this, Gérard had written a prose drama out of "Nicolas Flamel," a fragment of which, of great originality and remarkably effective, subsists in the columns of the "Mercure de France." Where is

the rest of it? It may be that Bibliophile Jacob knows. De Nerval was also busy with a social drama, the idea of which was somewhat like that of "Eugene Aram," and with a "Queen of Sheba," which never got as far as Solomon, and whose many adventures I shall relate to you. So for an idler he was a pretty hard-working man.

Gérard de Nerval's avoidance of the reputation he finally had to accept was not in the least, I am in a position to affirm it, the result of a plan to stimulate curiosity, but was due to rare conscientiousness and to the deepest respect for art. However carefully he wrought out his works, he still considered them too imperfect, and to stamp them with his name struck him as a piece of puerile vanity.

He was one of the earliest translators of "Faust." It was a difficult task, at that time, to translate into our tongue, which had been rendered excessively timid, the strange and mysterious beauties of that ultra-Romanticist drama. Nevertheless, he succeeded in doing so, and the Germans, who pretend to be unintelligible, had to confess themselves beaten. The German sphinx's riddle had been read by the French Œdipus.

His familiarity with Goethe, Uhland, Bürger, and Tieck imparted to Gérard's own work a certain shade of dreaminess which occasionally caused his own writings to be mistaken for translations of those of unknown poets from beyond the Rhine. It was only in his thought, however, that this Teutonism showed, for few writers of our day wrote in more chastened, more clear and more transparent French than he did. Although, like all the successful writers of to-day, he took part in the great Romanticist movement of 1830, the style of the eighteenth century sufficed him for the expression of a whole range of fantastic and singular ideas. He writes a Hoffmannic tale with the pen of Cazotte, and in his "Women of Cairo" one would swear it was Galland speaking with the tongue of Scheharazade. The most incredible eccentricity assumes, in his work, classical forms, so to speak. He has tender pallor, tones purposely deadened, faded tints, like those of tapestries in old castles, of wondrous harmony and softness, far more satisfying than the brand-new gilding and the bright illuminations that men were so lavish of. Details, discreetly attenuated, allow the ensemble to retain its full importance, and against the background of soft neutral tints the figures the author

desires to bring out show with an illusion of life truly magical, like those portraits painted on a background of vague shadow which irresistibly attract the glance.

Gérard de Nerval's sympathies and studies naturally drew him to Germany, which he often visited and where he made many a fruitful stay. The shadows of the old Teutonic oaks have more than once fallen upon his brow with confidential whispers; he has wandered under the limes with the heart-shaped leaves; he has saluted on the banks of the springs the white-robed elf whose wet white skirt drags through the green grass; he has seen the crows flying about above the Kyffhäusen; the kobolds have issued in his presence from out the cracks of the Hartz rocks, and the witches of the Brocken have danced round the young French poet, whom they took for a Iena student, the great round of the Walpurgisnachtstraum. Happier than the rest of us, he has leaned upon the table from which Mephistopheles brought out with his gimlet a stream of blazing wine. He descended the steps of that Berlin cellar down which too often stumbled the author of "Saint Sylvester's Eve" and "The Golden Jug." With calm glance he has gazed upon the play of light produced by the Rhine wine in the emerald-green roemer,

and has noted the queer shapes of the smoke of the pipes as it rose above Hegelian discussions in æsthetic drinking-shops.

It is to these excursions that we owe charmingly fanciful pages that may be safely placed by the side of the best chapters in Sterne's "Sentimental Journey." The author, in the most unexpected manner, mingles reflection and reverie, fancifulness and reality, trips into fairyland and travels on the highway. Now he is mounted on a chimera with flapping wings, and now upon a lean hired hack, and from a comical incident he passes to an ethereal ecstasy. He can play upon a postilion's horn the enchanting melodies of Achin d'Arnim and Clement Brentano, and when he stops at the hop-covered door of an inn to drink the brown München beer, the stein turns in his hands into the cup of the King of Thule. As he walks along, lovely faces smile upon him out of the foliage, the student Anselmo's pretty snakes dance on the tips of their tails, while the flowers that carpet the bank on the other side of the ditch indulge in pantheistic conversations. The hidden life of Germany breathes in these fanciful walks, in which description turns into legend and personal impressions into clever philosophical or literary

remarks. Only, it is to be noted that the French vein is never broken by Teutonic divagations.

It is to this time of our author's life that belongs the fine drama called "Leo Burckart," which was performed at the Porte-Saint-Martin, and which is one of the most noteworthy works of the day. Leo Burckart is a journalist who has ventilated, in the paper he edits, such bold political ideas and such novel plans of reform as to lead people to fear the action of the authorities against him. Instead of causing his arrest, however, the Prince, convinced of Leo's sincerity, gives him the office of the minister the journalist has criticised, and orders him to apply his theories and to put his dreams into practice. Leo accepts and comes into direct contact with men and things, — he, the free dreamer, who in his own study was so successful in balancing the world on the tip of his pen. Carried away by an abstract ideal, he seeks to govern without making use of the means of government. Like a minister of the Golden Age, he will not listen to the whispered communications of the police, and is therefore unaware that the life of the Prince is threatened and that his own honour is compromised. Looked upon by his former party as a traitor, distrusted by the Court

party, doing himself what he ought to have done through his subordinates, offending vested interests by exaggerated rigorism, walking blindly through the maze of intrigues, he loses his popularity after having been but a few months in power, loses his friends and almost his private honour, and thereupon resigns his office, having lost faith in his dreams and his talent, and scarce believing in man and in humanity. Yet no Machiavellian trap has been set for him; the Prince has loyally seconded him, and frankly aided the thinker.

The impression made by this drama, remarkable for its philosophical impartiality, would be gloomy were the play not brightened by an accurate and lifelike picture of the universities. Nothing can be more cleverly comical than the conspiracies of the students, for whom a drinking bout is the main interest in life, and who dream of Brutus as they fill their pipes. The play, the work of a poet who drank to intoxication of the heady wine of German mysticism, seems, strange to say, the coolly wrought-out work of an old diplomat used to affairs and grown gray in the knowledge of men. There is no passion, no violence, not a single piece of declamation, but, on the other hand, in

every part a clear and serene reason, an indulgence full of pity and understanding.

These works were followed by long trips in the East. "The Women of Cairo," and "The Nights of Ramazan" mark this new period. It was a sudden transition from the mists of Germany to the sunshine of Egypt, and a less well-endowed nature might have been dazzled by it, but Gérard de Nerval, in his book, the success of which has grown with each successive edition, managed to avoid commonplace enthusiasm and the garish descriptions of ordinary tourists. He takes us into the very life of the East, which is closed so straightly against the man who travels rapidly. Under a transparent veil he has related his own adventures in the modest tone and the playful artlessness which make certain pages of the "Memoirs" of the Venetian Carlo Gozzi such attractive reading. The story of Zeynab, the lovely yellow slave purchased from the djellab in an impulse of philanthropical pity, and who is the cause of so many pretty Oriental incidents that disturb his trip, is told with perfect art and the utmost good taste. The Coptic weddings, the Arab marriages, the evenings with the opium eaters, the manners of the fellahs, all

these details of Mohammedan life are described with uncommon cleverness, wit, and fidelity of observation.

The legends of the East were bound to exercise great influence upon an imagination so easily excited as that of Gérard de Nerval, prepared, besides, long before for these poetical witcheries by the Sanscrit erudition of Schlegel, the "Oriental-Occidental Divan" of Goethe, and the "Ghazels" of Rückert and Platen. The "Legend of Khalif Hakem" and the "Story of Belkis and Solomon" prove how deeply Gérard de Nerval was filled with the profound and mysterious spirit of these strange stories in which every word contains a symbol. It may even be said that he thus acquired certain suggestions of one belonging to the inner circle, certain ways of illuminati which would lead at times to the belief that he is stating his own sentiments. I should not be greatly surprised to learn that he, like the author of "The Devil in Love," had received the visit of a stranger who used Masonic signs, and who was quite surprised to find that he was not a brother Mason. Preoccupied by thoughts of the invisible world and of cosmogonic myths, he swung for a time in the circle of Swedenborg, Abbé Terrasson, and the author of "The Count of Cabalis." But his

visionary tendencies are fully compensated for by studies of the utmost realism, such as those upon Spifane, Restif de la Bretonne, the fullest and most intelligent written upon this Balzac of the gutter, and which is as interesting as the best worked-out novel. "Sylvia," our writer's most recent work, strikes me as absolutely irreproachable. It is made up of memories of his childhood recalled by the lovely sites of Ermenonville, by walks along flowery banks and by the side of the lakes, in the light mists reddened by the dawn, an idyl of the environs of Paris so pure, so fresh, so perfumed, so wet with dew, that it makes one unconsciously think of Daphnis and Chloe, of Paul and Virginia, of the chaste pairs of lovers who bathe their white feet in the springs or remain on the edge of the woods of Arcadia. It recalls a Greek statue with a light touch of pastel on lips and cheeks, due to the fancy of the sculptor.

IX

THE GREEN PORTFOLIO

EVERY time that I happen, when idle or sad, and impelled to plunge into the memories of the past, to open the old green portfolio, in which lie, more dusty than forgotten, the papers Gérard de Nerval used to leave in my rooms, as a bird drops its feathers as it goes, I am sure to lose myself in them for the rest of the day.

Among the notes, extracts, rough drafts, concise memoranda, articles begun, variants of the same thought turned over and over, philosophical or moral maxims condensed in golden Pythagorean verse, a form Gérard was particularly fond of, dramatic dialogues, numbered and cut like dressed stones waiting to be set in the vaulting, among all those bits of literary architectonics, scattered and mixed up to such an extent that no eye, not even that of friendship, can make out the plan,—I occasionally come across letters of mine, scented with vinegar and slashed in the ports of the Levant by the

scissors of the health officers, letters yellow as mummy bandages, written to my friend while he was travelling in the East, and that, more fortunate than I, rode in his caravan. I re-read them, taking care not to tear them along the well-worn creases, and a low, soft, far-away voice, yet still recognisable, for it is my own, whispers in my ear, in well-known words, in turns habitual to me, thoughts and news then current in our world. How far off it all is now, swept away into deep forgetfulness by the swift darkness! And yet how near still; how little has the heart changed! The same thoughts still meander through the convolutions of the brain, meeting and greeting each other at the same old places. Most of the sentences in those letters might have been written yesterday, and on arrival at their destination they would not have seemed any more old-fashioned than if they had been composed that very morning. Man does not change as much as he fancies he does.

I come once more upon the paradoxes I indulged in of yore, and they are lively enough, considering their age; some of them, moreover, have since been accepted as truths. The judgments of my youth, so insolently sincere, were not always dictated by

strong feeling; some are equitable and judicious, for one is sometimes in the right at twenty and in the wrong at sixty. A man should not deny his youth; the grown man merely carries out the dreams of the youngster. Every fine work is a seed planted in April which will bloom in October. A man who has no ideas when he is twenty-one will never have any.

I pray to be forgiven for all this moralising, and for stringing aphorisms together as Sancho Panza was wont to string proverbs, while I sit opposite a portfolio half emptied of its contents. A multitude of bits of paper on which, in the form of condensed formulæ, of microscopic writing mingled with ciphers as difficult to read as the private notes of Raymond Lulli, Faust, or Herr Trippa, are summed, concentrated, sublimated like drops of elixir, all the doctrines of this world: theogonies, mythologies, religions, systems, interpretations, glosses, utopias, confusedly fluttering and whirling, with here and there a hermeneutic or cabalistic sign, for Gérard did not disdain to call upon Nicolas Flamel, or to have a bit of talk with "the White Woman" and "the Red Servant," so that if one were to pick up one of these scraps, it would prove

as engrossing as the cryptogram in Edgar Poe's "The Gold Bug," and require frightful intensity of attention.

It will be best, therefore, to pick out of the bundle the following simple letter, less yellowed, less musty, less browned by the hellish reagents, and really containing only its evident meaning. As I place it in the light, it positively has a kindly, candid, sympathetic look. It was written by a friend dear to both of us, Bouchardy. In 1857 that letter was but an autograph; now it may take its place as a relic in the green portfolio consecrated to the memory of my dead friend. I shall transcribe it to show how refined and lovely was Bouchardy's soul, and how staunch was the friendship that united the members of our little company. Many years had elapsed since we had met at Petrus Borel's, and we had all scattered in quest of glory and daily bread. It will show, however, how green the memory of our friendship had remained: —

"*January* 12, 1857.

"DEAR THÉOPHILE:

"I should assuredly have kept deep within my heart the gratitude I feel for the kind and beautiful things you said of me in your article of January 5, but in the course of it you referred to the golden by-

gone days of our friendship, and as that time constitutes the one and only remembrance of my youth, I must indulge in the delight of recalling it with you.

"Nor, indeed, can we too often recall it, for it was the loveliest of our dreams, dreamed with wide-awake eyes, and hearts full of faith, of enthusiasm, and of love.

"We did not dream . . . when some unknown and swift current had borne us all together to the same shore, so that we might meet with echoes for our yet hesitating voices, and ardent souls for our bold and fervent ones.

"A blessed and fair meeting was that, my dear Théophile, in which each was to the brother who loved him a devoted friend, and a travelling companion who made one forget the length of the way and the fatigue of the journey.

"Meetings lovelier than can be told, those in which each and all wished for the success of all the others, without mad exaggeration or collective vanity; in which each of us was ready to lend his shoulder to the foot of him who meant to try to climb and to succeed.

"Which amongst us were rich or predestined? We knew not, for we were a family that owned no Benjamin and recognised no right of primogeniture. Whilst the Fourierists started phalansteries, the Saint-Simonians new social contracts, and the Democrats formed new plans, we, deaf to all these voices, heard only the whisper of art as it moved in the childbirth of progress. Our only weapons were the pen, the brush, the lyre, and the sculptor's chisel; our only gods were the great masters; our only standard that of art, which we meant to unfurl and defend.

"Were we indebted to fortunate temperaments for these sublime thoughts? or were we favoured by circumstances? It matters little; the golden beams that sought us out individually drew us towards each other and melted into one single treasury, from which we one and all drew, without ever exhausting it, faith, trust, confidence, enthusiasm, hope, and even generosity.

"How was it, friend of mine, that reflection that cools, anxiety that enervates, jealousy that parts, that all the evil passions that enter everywhere and at all times, could not penetrate into our meetings of old?

"It is a sweet and deep mystery, is it not? — which even now returns to our surprised and delighted hearts, like a vague reminiscence of blessed youth, of magnetic confraternity, of enchanted beatitude.

"It was a happy time, of which we ought to be proud, dear Théophile; for when a man has travelled through life, so often saddened by bitterness, he ought to be proud of having enjoyed a few happy hours, and he ought to boast of that happiness. *Remember!*

"J. BOUCHARDY."

Rather more than a quarter of a century lies between that letter and 1830. The remembrance is as sweet as if it were but of yesterday; the feeling of enchantment still survives. From the land of exile where I am travelling, earning fame by the sweat of my brow, tramping through briars, over stones, and along roads bristling with man-traps, I look back with regretful, melancholy gaze upon the lost Paradise — and yet I ate no apple and in no wise disobeyed our lord Hugo! No doubt such delight could not last. It was impossible to conceive of a fairer mode of life than being young, intelligent, loving, capable of understanding each other and communicating with the ele-

ments of art; and so all those who lived that life are still dazzled by the memory of it. Just see how an allusion in a newspaper article tickles dear old Bouchardy to the very depths of his soul; how he still answers to the call, how he remembers with quickening pulse; how he is borne away in thought to the little room constellated with medallions by Jehan du Seigneur and sketches by Louis Boulanger, on one of those nights when we talked of art and the ideal, nature, form, and colour, and other like subjects, which then appeared to us, and rightly, of the most burning importance, just as they would be to-day. How ardently he would take part in the discussion now, and especially how intently he would listen.

That tender and simple letter from him whom we used to call the Maharajah of Lahore, the golden-skinned, blue-haired prince, and which I come upon by chance in the Field of the Dead of my portfolios, that shall soon be as crowded as the Fields of Eyoub and Scutari, has occupied my thoughts the whole day, and done away with the article I had intended to write. I had promised to relate the voyage of Belkis, the Queen of Sheba, whom Gérard de Nerval had gone to fetch out of the depths of the Orient, in company with de la

Huppe, in order to bring her, he claimed, to Solomon, the erotic author of "Sir-Hasirim," but in reality to Meyerbeer, in Berlin, the author of "Robert the Devil," who wanted to get out of it a soprano part that would turn the head of every prima donna. But I could not manage it. Bouchardy's letter insisted upon being printed, as if it called out on behalf of our dead companions. The word REMEMBER, placed at the end of the letter, was put there in mysterious and commanding fashion. Remember! Yes, I do remember, and this book is the proof that I do. Belkis may wait, for a few weeks will not age her whose youth is reckoned by thousands of years. Those must first be heard who speak and move about under the earth like the moles and Hamlet's father.

All the same I had no end of interesting details to give you concerning the seventy-five pre-Adamite kings that appeared in the prologue, and which Meyerbeer, as timorous then as he was later, wished to cut out as being "dangerous;" concerning the divine Lilith also, Adam's first wife, and ancestress of the Queen of Sheba; also about the gown worn by Belkis, a gown fit to make Worth wonder, adorned as it was with seventy different kinds of gems, and the train of which was borne

by a monkey, dressed in cloth of gold, that every now and then lifted it up with a lascivious grin. Nor should I have failed to describe the instinctive gesture which, causing Belkis to mistake the polished pavement for water, led her to lift up her skirts in the presence of Solomon.

X

THE LEGEND OF THE RED WAISTCOAT

THE red waistcoat! It is more than forty years since I wore it, yet people still speak of it, and will go on speaking of it in days to come, so deep did that flash of colour penetrate the public's eye. If the name of Théophile Gautier happens to be spoken in the presence of a Philistine, even of one who has never read a line of prose or verse of mine, he knows me at least by the red waistcoat I wore at the first performance of "Hernani," and he says, with the self-satisfied look of the man who knows what he is talking about: "Oh, yes. You mean the young fellow with the red waistcoat and the long hair." And that is the way I shall go down to posterity. My books, my verse, my articles, my travels will be forgotten, but men will remember my red waistcoat. That spark will go on shining when everything else of mine will long since have been lost in night,

and it will set me apart from those of my contemporaries whose works were no better than mine, but who wore dark-coloured waistcoats. Nor am I sorry to leave this impression behind me; it has a certain grim haughtiness about it, and in spite of some youthful lack of taste, exhibits a not unpleasant contempt for public opinion and ridicule.

Any one acquainted with the French character will readily acknowledge that the mere fact of showing one's self in a theatre where what it is the custom to call *tout Paris* is assembled, with hair as long as Albert Dürer's and a waistcoat as red as an Andalusian torero's muleta, calls for far more courage and strength of soul than is required by a man storming a redoubt bristling with death-dealing guns. For in every war numberless brave fellows perform that easy feat without having to be urged, while up to the present but one single Frenchman has been found daring enough to cover his breast with a piece of stuff of so aggressive, unusual, and dazzling a colour. Judging by the imperturbable disdain with which he affronted the glances of the audience, it was easy to see that, if he had been in the least degree egged on, he would have turned up at the second performance in a daffodil-yellow vest.

The utter amazement of the public and the persistence of an impression that ought not to have lasted beyond the close of the first act, must have been due less to the startling colour of the garment than to the heroic madness that thus exposed itself, with consummate coolness, to the sarcasm of the women, the pity of the old men, the contemptuous glances of the dandies, and the coarse laughter of the bourgeois.

I did try to tear off that waistcoat of Nessus that clung to my skin, and failing to do so I bravely put up with it in spite of the fancy of the bourgeois, who can never think of me as dressed in any other colour, in spite of the negrohead, bronze-green, maroon, iron-gray, soot-black, London-smoke, steel-gray, rotten-olive, bad-pickle, and other tasteful shades of overcoats in neutral tones, such as may be discovered, after long meditations, by a civilisation that has no sense of colour.

The case is the same with my hair. I have worn it cut short, but in vain, — it was always assumed to be long; and even had I exhibited in the orchestra stalls a hairless, ivory-coloured skull, shining like an ostrich's egg, people would still have maintained that great waves of Merovingian locks flowed down upon my

shoulders. Most ridiculous! So I have allowed the little I have to grow as it pleases, and it has turned the permission to account, the traitor, and given me a little bit the look of a Romanticist Absalom.

I stated at the outset of these reminiscences, how it was that I came to be recruited by Gérard into the company of "Hernani" in Rioult's studio, and how I was intrusted with the command of a small squad that answered to the password *Hierro*. That evening was to be, in my opinion, and rightly too, the greatest event of the age, since it was to inaugurate free, youthful, and new thought upon the débris of old routine; and I therefore wished to solemnise the occasion by a specially splendid dress, by an eccentric and gorgeous costume that should do honour to the Master, the school, and the play. At that time the painter student still prevailed in me over the poet, and I was much preoccupied with the interests of colour. As far as I was concerned the world was divided into flamboyants and dullards, the former the object of my love, the latter of my aversion. I wanted a return to life, light, movement, audacity in thought and execution, to the fair times of the Renaissance and real antiquity, so that I rejected the faint colouring, the thin, dry drawing,

and the compositions that looked like groups of lay figures, which the Empire had bequeathed to the Restoration.

These distinctions applied to literature also in my mind. Diderot was a flamboyant for me, Voltaire a dullard, just as Rubens and Poussin were similarly contrasted. But I had in addition a special taste, love for red. I adored that noble colour, now dishonoured by political fury, for it is purple, blood, life, light, and heat, and it harmonises admirably with gold and marble. It was therefore with genuine grief that I saw it disappearing from modern life and even from painting. Before 1789 a man might wear a scarlet mantle braided with gold, but now, in order to get a glimpse of the proscribed colour, I was reduced to watch the Swiss guards relieving sentries, or to look at the red coats of English fox-hunters in the windows of print-sellers. Did not "Hernani" offer a sublime opportunity to restore red to the position it should never have lost; and was it not proper that a young, lion-hearted painter student should declare himself the champion of Red, and flout the detested colour in the faces of the Grays, of that crowd of Classicists equally hostile to the splendours of poetry? These oxen, I

resolved, should behold red before their eyes, and should hear the verse of Hugo.

I do not intend to attempt to correct a legend, but I am bound to say that the waistcoat was, as a matter of fact, a doublet cut on the pattern of the Milanese globose breastplates and the Valois doublets, busked to a point on the stomach and ridged down the centre. I have been told that I possess a very full vocabulary, but I cannot find words to express the amazed look of my tailor when I described the kind of waistcoat I wanted. "He remained speechless," and Lebrun's studies in expression, at the page marked "Astonishment," have no faces with eyes wider open, eyebrows more uplifted, and more wrinkles at the top of the forehead, than the face of my worthy Gaulois — such was his name — at that moment. He thought me crazy, but respect prevented his giving voice to his feelings, out of deference to a family he thought highly of; he merely objected in a timid voice: —

"But that is not the fashion, sir."

"Well, it shall be the fashion, once I have worn it," I replied with a coolness worthy of Beau Brummel, Nash, Count d'Orsay, or any other celebrated dandy.

"I do not understand the cutting of it. It is more of a theatrical costume than a town suit, and I may make a mess of it."

"I am going to give you a pattern in gray linen, drawn, cut, and basted by myself. You can fit it. It hooks down the back like the waistcoats of the Saint-Simonians, but is in no wise symbolical."

"Very well, very well. My fellow-craftsmen will laugh at me, but I shall do what you want. Now, of what stuff is this precious garment to be made?"

I drew from a coffer a splendid piece of cherry or Chinese vermilion satin, and triumphantly unfolded it before my terrified tailor, with an air of calm satisfaction that revived his fears that I was out of my mind. The light shimmered and gleamed upon the folds of the stuff, which I rumpled in order to bring out the play of light and shade, making it run through the warmest, the richest, the most ardent, the most delicate shades of red. In order to avoid wearing the infamous red of '93, I had admitted a slight admixture of purple in the dye, for I was very desirous not to be suspected of any political intention. I was not an admirer of Saint-Just and Maximilian Robespierre, as were some of my comrades, who posed as the Mon-

tagnards of poetry, but I was rather a mediæval, steel-clad feudal baron, ready to intrench myself against the invasion of the age in the stronghold of Goetz von Berlichingen, as was proper in a page of the Victor Hugo of that day, who had also his tower in the Sierra.

In spite of the easily understood repugnance of worthy Gaulois, the doublet was duly made, was hooked behind, and, save for the fact that it was the only one of that cut and colour in the theatre, became me as well as a fashionable waistcoat. The rest of my dress consisted of trousers of a very light sea-green, with a black velvet band down the outer seam, a black coat with very broad velvet facings turned well back, and a full gray overcoat lined with green satin. Round my neck I wore a moiré ribbon, which answered the double purpose of a shirt collar and a necktie. I am bound to confess that this costume was well devised to irritate and scandalise the Philistines. Nor are you to imagine that I have improved on what the costume really was. My description is strictly accurate. In "Victor Hugo's Life told by an Eye-Witness" are these words: "The only eccentricity was in the costumes, and for that matter, it was sufficient to horrify the occupants of the boxes. People pointed

with horror to M. Théophile Gautier, whose flaming waistcoat blazed that evening above a pair of light gray trousers, with a black velvet stripe, and whose hair escaped from under the broad brim of a flat hat. The impassibility of his pale, regular features, and the coolness with which he looked at the respectable people in the boxes showed to what depths of abomination and desolation the drama had fallen."

Yea, verily, I did look at them with contempt, these larvæ of the past and of routine, at all those foes of art, of idealism, of liberty, and of poetry, who sought to close the gates of the future with their palsied hands, and in my heart burned fierce desire to scalp them with my tomahawk and to hang these trophies at my belt. In trying to do this, however, I should have run the risk of getting more wigs than heads of hair, for if the Classicist school gibed at the long hair of the modern school, it displayed, on the other hand, round the balconies of the Théâtre-Français a collection of bald heads comparable to the chaplet of skulls of the god Dourga. This fact was so self-evident that at the sight of these yellow skulls uprising from between the triangular shirt-collars, with flesh tones the colour of rancid butter, and malevolent in spite of their paternal

look, a young sculptor of much wit and talent, who has since become famous, and whose witticisms are as admirable as his statues, shouted amid the tumult: "Guillotine all those knee-caps!"

I must beg my reader to forgive my keeping them waiting so long upon the threshold of "Hernani," while I am talking of myself. It is not my custom to sin in this way, and if I knew how to abstract myself wholly from my work, I should do it. But the supernatural apparition, the fierce and meteoric flaming of my scarlet doublet on the horizon of Romanticism having been called "a sign of the times," to quote the "Revue des Deux Mondes," and having preoccupied this nineteenth century of ours that had surely something better to do, I have been compelled to do violence to my natural modesty and to bring myself forward for a moment, seeing that I it was who wore that wondrous doublet.

XI

FIRST PERFORMANCE OF "HERNANI"

FEBRUARY 25, 1830! That date stands out in my past in letters of fire; it is that of the first performance of "Hernani." That one evening moulded my whole life. It was then I felt the impulse which yet drives me on, though so many years have elapsed, and which will keep me going to the end of my career. Though much time has gone by, I still feel the same sensation of dazzling beauty; the enthusiasm of my youth has not waned, and whenever I hear the magic sound of the horn, I prick up my ears like an old war-horse ready to rush into battle again.

The young poet, with proud audacity and consciousness of genius, preferring, besides, glory to success, had obstinately refused the assistance of the paid cohorts that perform an accompaniment to a successful performance, and help out failures. These paid applauders

have a taste of their own, just like Academicians. Generally speaking they were Classicists, and they would have applauded Victor Hugo most unwillingly; their favourites at that time were Casimir Delavigne and Scribe, so that Hugo ran the risk, if matters went wrong, of being left in the lurch in the thick of the fight. There was talk of cabals, of intrigues secretly entered upon, almost of snares, even, prepared to kill the play and to get rid of the new school at one fell swoop. Literary hatred is fiercer by far than political hatred, for it sets in motion the most sensitive fibres of self-love, and the triumph of the adversary proclaims the other man a fool. Therefore the most respectable people in the world are ready to resort, in such cases, to any infamous tricks, big or little, without the least compunction.

Brave as Hernani might be, it would never do to leave him to fight the battle alone against a prejudiced and riotous pit, against boxes apparently more sedate, but no less dangerous under their politely concealed hostility, and whose sneers buzz most importunately under the hisses, more open, at least, in their attacks. The Romanticist youth, full of ardour and rendered fanatical by the preface to "Cromwell," resolved to

support "the mountain hawk," as Alarcon calls "The Weaver of Segovia." It offered its services to the Master, who accepted them. No doubt such a mass of fire and enthusiasm might prove dangerous, but timidity was not the weak point of that time. Small squads were enrolled in the band of supporters, each man bearing as a pass the square of red paper with the word *Hierro* inscribed upon it. All these details are well known, and I need not dwell upon them.

The smaller fry of the press of that day and polemical writers took pleasure in describing as a rabble of sordid roughs these young fellows, all of whom belonged to good families, who were well educated, well bred, crazy about art and poetry, some of them writers, some painters, some composers, others sculptors or architects or critics, or in some way busied with things literary. It was not Attila's filthy, fierce, unkempt, ignorant Huns that were encamped in front of the Théâtre-Français, but the knights of the future, the champions of thought, the defenders of the freedom of art; and they were handsome, free, and young. They had hair, — that goes without saying, for a man cannot be born with a wig on, — and plenty of hair, falling in soft and

shining curls, for they combed it carefully. Some wore small mustaches and others full beards; that is quite true, but this fashion became their clever, proud, bold faces, which the Renaissance masters would willingly have taken for models.

The "brigands of thought," as Philothée O'Neddy put it, did not, it must be owned, resemble your snug notary, but their costumes, marked by the expression of individual taste and due feeling for colour, lent themselves better to painting. Satin and velvet, braids and frogs and fur collars and cuffs were surely as good as the swallow-tailed coats, the short-waisted waistcoats of silk, the starched muslin cravats into which chins were sunk, and the corners of white linen shirt-collars that rose like blinders on either side of the gold-spectacled noses. Even the soft felt hat and the jacket of the young students not rich enough to realise their dreams of costumes after the fashion of Rubens and Velasquez, were more elegant than the stove-pipe hat and old dress-coat with rumpled folds of the old frequenters of the Comédie-Française, horrified at the invasion of these young Shakesperian barbarians.

Do not, therefore, believe a word of all the tales told of our company.

It would have been sufficient to admit our battalion an hour before the general public, but with perfidious intention, and no doubt in the hope that there would occur a row of some sort necessitating the interference of the police, the doors were opened at two in the afternoon, involving an eight hours' wait before the raising of the curtain. The auditorium was not lighted; theatres are dark by day and are illumined at night only. Evening is their dawn, and light penetrates in them only when it dies out of the heavens. This oversetting of things is in accord with their factitious life; while reality is at work, fiction sleeps.

Strange indeed is the aspect of the interior of a theatre during the day. The great height and size of the auditorium, increased by its emptiness, make one feel as if within a cathedral nave. The place is sunk in a faint darkness, into which fall, through an opening above or the pane in the door of a box, dim rays, a bluish light contrasting with the quivering red beams of the service lanterns scattered around in numbers sufficient, not to illumine, but to make the darkness visible. A visionary's eye, like that of Hoffmann, would easily see in it the setting of a fantastic tale. I had never been in a theatre by day, and when our company burst

in, like a flood pouring through a broken dam, I was struck by this Piranesi-like effect.

We piled in as comfortably as we could on the uppermost seats, in the dark corners of the gods, on the rear seats of the balconies, in every suspicious and dangerous recess where might post themselves owners of shrill-toned keys, maddened *claqueurs*, starched wiseacres in love with Campistron and fearing a massacre of the busts by us *septembriseurs* of a new sort. We were scarcely more comfortable than Don Carlos would presently be within the cupboard, but the worst places had been reserved for the most enthusiastic, just as in war the most perilous posts are given to the reckless fellows who love to plunge into the thick of danger. The others, not less trusty, but more sedate, occupied the pit, drawn up in order under the eye of their leaders and ready to fall as one man upon the Philistines at the least sign of hostility on their part.

Six to seven hours waiting in the dark, or at least in the half-darkness of a theatre in which the great chandelier has not been lighted, is pretty long, even when after the darkness "Hernani" is to rise like the sun in his glory.

We began talking about the play and what we knew of it. Some of us, who were more intimate with the Master, had heard him read portions of it, and remembered a few lines, which they quoted and which awoke the liveliest enthusiasm. A new "Cid" was to appear in this play, the work of a young Corneille, no less proud, no less haughty and Castilian than the first, but who had turned to Shakespeare. The various names that ought to have been given to the play were discussed. Some regretted that the name of "Three for One," had not been retained, for it struck them as a genuine Calderon title, a cloak and sword appellation, thoroughly Spanish and Romanticist, in the style of "Life is a Dream," and "April and May Morns." Others rightly considered that the title, or rather subtitle, of the play, "Castilian Honour," was more serious. Most preferred "Hernani" alone, and it is their view that eventually prevailed, for it is the name that the drama has since been known by, and which, to use a Homeric expression, flits, a winged name, upon the lips of men.

Ten years later I was travelling through Spain. Between Astigarraga and Tolosa, we traversed, at the top speed of our mules, a village half ruined in the course

of the war between the Christinos and the Carlists. Through the darkness I could make out the walls with great coats of arms carved above the doors and black windows with complicated iron-work, gratings, and rich balconies, testifying to bygone splendour. I asked the zagal who was running by the side of the carriage, his hand resting upon the sharp backbone of the off mule, the name of the village, and he answered, "Ernani." On hearing these three syllables, so full of memories, the drowsiness that had come over me, after a fatiguing day, vanished at once, and through the incessant tinkling of the mules' bells there sounded like a far-away sigh the faint blast of Hernani's horn. I saw again in a flash the proud mountaineer in his buff jerkin, his green sleeves, and his red hose; Don Carlos, in gilded armour; Dona Sol, pale and robed in white; Ruy Gomez de Silva standing before the portraits of his ancestors, — in a word, the whole of the play. I even seemed to hear the row that went on at the first performance.

When Victor Hugo, still a child, returned from Spain to France after the fall of King Joseph, he must have traversed this place, the aspect of which is unchanged, and heard a postilion speak that strange, high-sounding

name, so well suited to verse, and which, ripening later in his brain, like a seed forgotten in a corner, bloomed out into the magnificent drama.

We were beginning to feel hungry. The most prudent among us had brought chocolate and rolls; some, with bated breath be it spoken, saveloys; evil-minded Classicists maintain these were flavoured with garlic. I do not believe they were, but had they been garlic is classical, for in Vergil Thestylis crushed garlic for the harvesters. The meal finished, a few ballads of Hugo's were sung, and then some of those endless studio rigmaroles that, like a water-wheel with its buckets, incessantly bring in the refrain with the same old piece of nonsense in it; next we indulged in imitations of the cries of the various animals in the Ark, which their descendants in the Zoölogical Gardens would have considered faultless. Innocent practical jokes, such as are loved of young painter students were got off; the heads, or rather the scalps of a few Academicians were called for; dreams from classical tragedies were recited, and all sorts of liberties taken with the good old goddess Melpomene, who, little accustomed to having her marble peplum rumpled in this fashion, must have felt no end of astonishment at it.

Meantime the great chandelier was slowly being lowered from the ceiling with its triple row of gas-jets and its prismatic scintillations. The footlights were being lighted and drew between the world of reality and the world of fiction a luminous line of demarcation. The candelabra began to flame out in the stage-boxes, and the place was gradually filling up. The doors of the boxes opened and closed noisily. The ladies, who were installing themselves as for a prolonged sitting, easing their shoulders out of their low-necked dresses and settling themselves in their skirts, laid their bouquets and their glasses on the velvet-covered rail. Although our school has been reproached with the love of the ugly, I am bound to say that the handsome, young, and pretty women were warmly cheered by our passionate youthful band, a performance which the old and ugly of their sex looked upon as shockingly improper and in the worst of taste. Those we cheered hid their faces behind their bouquets with a forgiving smile.

The orchestra stalls and the balcony were paved with academical and Classicist bald-heads. A stormy rumour made itself heard in the theatre; it was time the curtain went up. We might have come to blows before

the play began, so great was the animosity between the two parties. At last the three knocks were heard. The curtain rose slowly, and in a small sixteenth-century bed-chamber, lighted by a small lamp, was seen the elderly Doña Josefa Duarte, the bodice of her dress embroidered with jet, in the fashion of the times of Isabella the Catholic, listening for the rap at the secret door by which is to enter the lover awaited by her mistress.

> " Serait-ce déjà lui ? — C'est bien à l'escalier
> Dérobé — "
>
> (Can it be he ? —It is surely at the private
> Door —)

The fight was on. That word summarily chucked into the next line, that audacious overflow, impertinent even, was like a professional swashbuckler, a Saltabadil, a Scoronconcolo smacking the face of Classicism and challenging it to a duel.

XII

"HERNANI"

WHAT! With the very first words the orgy is already in full swing! Verse is smashed up and the pieces thrown from the windows!" said a Classicist admirer of Voltaire, with the indulgent smile of wisdom beholding folly.

He was a tolerant man, after all, and would not have objected to prudent innovations provided the French tongue had been respected, but such carelessness at the very outset had to be condemned in a poet, no matter what his principles, whether Liberal or Royalist, might be.

"It is not a piece of carelessness, it is a beauty," replied a Romanticist from Devéria's studio, tawny as Cordova leather and with a shock of thick red hair like a figure in Giorgione's paintings.

"'C'est bien à l'escalier
Dérobé.'

"Do you not see that the word *dérobé*, removed and as it were suspended beyond the line, describes admirably the stair of love and mystery that winds in the thickness of the manor wall? It is marvellously architectonic, full of sixteenth-century feeling, and reveals the deepest acquaintance with a whole vanished civilisation."

Devéria's ingenious pupil no doubt saw too many things in that overflow, for his remarks, carried to excessive length, aroused calls for order and requests that he should be put out, the growing earnestness of which soon reduced him to silence.

It would be a difficult task to describe the effect produced upon the audience by the striking, virile, vigorous verse, that had so strange a ring, and a swing that recalled at once both Corneille and Shakespeare, for nowadays the very innovations that then were considered barbarisms are accounted classical. It must also be carefully borne in mind that in France, at that time, abhorrence of plain speaking and of the use of crude words was carried to a fairly unimaginable extent. And with the best will in the world, all one can do now is to conceive of this abhorrence from an historical point of view, as is done concerning certain

motives or prejudices the very causes of which have disappeared.

To-day, when witnessing a performance of "Hernani," and following the play of the actors upon an early copy of the piece, marked on the margins with the thumb-nail to indicate the parts at which the tumult broke out, or where the performance was interrupted or the work hissed, and which are the very passages that now provoke outbursts of applause, — passages that were then fields of battle well trampled over, redoubts that were stormed and retaken, ambushes where one lay in wait round the corner of an epithet, relays of hounds ready to spring at the throat of a hunted metaphor, — it is impossible not to experience a sensation of surprise which the present generation, for ever freed from all that nonsense by the valiant efforts we put forth in times of old, can never fully share.

How can one explain, for instance, that this line, —

"Est-il minuit ? — Minuit bientôt"
(Is it midnight ? — It is about to strike), —

should have raised a storm and that the battle raged for three days around that hemistich ? It was adjudged to

be trivial, familiar, improper. Behold a king asking what time it is in the language of a commoner, and answered as though he were a clodhopper! Serve him right! If he had used a fine periphrasis, he would have been replied to politely, somewhat in this fashion: —

"— l'heure
Atteindra bientôt sa dernière demeure."

(— the time
Will soon have reached its latest hour.)

Not only was plain speaking objected to in verse, the public also kicked against epithets, metaphors, comparisons, poetic expressions, — in a word, and to put it briefly, against lyricism, with its rapid flights to nature, the uplifting of the soul above prosaic situations, the flashing of poetry in the drama, so frequent in Shakespeare, Calderon, and Goethe, and so rare in our great masters of the seventeenth century that in the whole drama of that period there are but two picturesque verses, the one in Corneille, the other in Molière; the first in the "Cid," the second in the remarks of Orgon, just returned from the country and warming his hands before the fire. Corneille's line is a splendid bit of padding, wrought by powerful hands out of

the cedar of the celestial abodes in order to furnish the rime to "voiles" which he needed: —

> "Cette obscure clarté qui tombe des étoiles."
> (The dusky light of the stars of night.)

Molière's line —

> "La campagne à présent n'est pas beaucoup fleurie"
> (But few blooms now are in the meadows strewn) —

expresses a feeling of commonplace comfort and the satisfaction of no longer being exposed to the vicissitudes of the weather, though it also reminds one, in that sombre Parisian home, in which tortuous intrigue writhes like a snake, that out in the country there is yet greenery, and that man is ever surrounded by nature, even though he scarcely ever glances at it.

This novel spectacle interested the evil-wishers. They followed closely the action of the play, so vigorously initiated, and more than once they renounced the pleasure of interrupting or expressing disapprobation, for the pleasure of listening. There were moments when the poet's genius mastered the love of routine and the malevolent instincts of the crowd, which rebels against any new ascendency and is apt to think that it admires quite enough men as it is.

In spite of the terror inspired by Hugo's partisans, who were scattered about in small parties and who were easily recognised by their peculiar costumes and their fierce looks, there sounded in the theatre the low roar of the excited crowd, which is no more to be stilled than the roar of the sea. The wrought up feelings of an audience always burst out and manifest themselves by unmistakable signs. It needed only to cast a glance at the public to learn that this was no ordinary performance; that two systems, two parties, two armies, two civilisations — it is no exaggeration to put it so — were facing each other, filled with cordial reciprocal hatred of the intense literary kind, ready to come to blows and longing for a fight. The general attitude was one of hostility; elbows were stuck out, the least friction would have sufficed to cause an outbreak, and it was easy to see that the long-haired youth considered the clean-shaven gentleman an atrocious idiot, and would not long refrain from giving expression to his private opinions.

In point of fact, minor rows, speedily suppressed, broke out when Don Carlos indulged in some of his Romanticist pleasantries, when Don Ruy Gomez de Silva swore by Saint John of Avila, and when were

noted certain touches of Spanish local colour borrowed from the "Romancero" for the sake of greater accuracy. But it was plain that the mingling of familiarity and grandeur, of heroism and passion and moodishness in Hernani, and of Homeric tautology in old Silva, aroused the deepest resentment among that portion of the audience that did not form part of Hugo's *salteadores*.

The *De ta suite — j'en suis!* (In thy train! — I am indeed!) which ends the first act became, I need not say, a theme for endless jokes on the part of the numerous tribe of the clean-shaven; but the lines in the monologue are so fine that even when repeated by these idiots they remained wonderful.

Mlle. Gay, who was later Mme. Delphine de Girardin, and who even then was famous as a poet, attracted universal attention by her blonde beauty. She had naturally the pose and the dress she has in the well-known portrait of her that Hersent painted: a white dress, blue scarf, long golden curls, her arm bent, and one finger pressed against her cheek in an attitude of attentive admiration. She was a Muse who seemed to be intently listening to Apollo. Lamartine and Victor Hugo were great friends of hers; she worshipped their

genius to the last, and only when cold in death did her lovely hand drop the censer. On that evening, on that forever memorable first performance of "Hernani," she applauded — like the veriest student, in his place before two o'clock, thanks to his red card — the shocking beauties, the revolting traits of genius.

THE REVIVAL OF "HERNANI"

(June 21, 1867)

IT is thirty-seven years ago that, thanks to the square of red paper stamped with the word *Hierro*, I entered the Théâtre-Français long before the hour at which the performance was to begin, in the company of young poets, young painters, young sculptors — we were all young then! — enthusiastic, filled with faith, and resolved to conquer or die in the great literary battle about to be fought out. It was February 25, 1830, the day of "Hernani," a date that no Romanticist has forgotten and that the Classicists perhaps remember, for the fight was waged bitterly by both parties. Happy days, indeed, when intellectual matters could so highly excite the masses!

Nor was the emotion I felt last Thursday any less deep. Thirty-seven years! Twice as much as the span that Tacitus calls "a great space in human life." Alas! of the old Romanticist battalions but few veterans are left; the survivors, however, were present,

and it was with melancholy pleasure that I recognised them in the stalls or the boxes, and that I thought of the trusty comrades long since dead. True, "Hernani" no longer needs its veteran guard, for no one thinks nowadays of attacking it. The public has followed the example set by Don Carlos; it has forgiven the rebel and restored all his titles. Hernani is now John of Aragon, grand master of Avis, Duke of Segorba and Duke of Cardona, Marquis of Monroy, Count Albatera; Donna Sol's arms cling round his neck above the collar of the Golden Fleece, and but for the imprudent pact entered into with Ruy Gomez, he would be perfectly happy.

But it was not so of yore, and night after night Hernani had to blow his horn to summon his mountain hawks, that not infrequently bore away in their talons a Classicist scalp as a token of victory. Certain lines were stormed and restormed like redoubts that two armies fight for with equal obstinacy. One evening the Romanticists triumphed with a passage that the enemy captured the next night, and from which it had to be driven. What a din there was! What shouts! What hoots! What hisses! What bursts of bravos! What thunders of applause! The leaders of the con-

tending parties insulted each other like the heroes of Homer before they came to blows, and at times, I am bound to confess, they were not more courteous than Achilles and Agamemnon. But the winged words flew up to the top of the house and attention was quickly recalled to the stage.

We would come out at the close of the performance worn out and breathless; elated when the evening had been a fortunate one for us, cursing the Philistines when we had suffered a reverse; and until every man had regained his home, the echoes of night gave back fragments of Hernani's monologue or of Don Carlos'; for one and all we knew the play by heart, and even now, if need were, I could do the prompting from memory.

To the generation of that day "Hernani" was what the "Cid" had been to Corneille's contemporaries. Whoever was young, valiant, in love, or poetical, was filled with the breath of it. The fine heroical and Castilian exaggeration, the splendid Spanish pomposity, the language at once so proud and haughty in its familiarity, the images so dazzlingly strange intoxicated us, made us ecstatic, and turned our heads with their entrancing poetry. Undoubtedly the author of "Hernani" has written plays as beautiful, as complete, and

perhaps even more dramatic than that one, but none of them fascinated us to such an extent.

But there, like Nestor, the good knight of Gerennia, I am, though I have not reached his age, telling stories and informing the men of to-day of what the men of yore were. Let us, as is proper, leave the past for the present, and return to last Thursday's performance. The hall was filled by as large and as interested an audience as on February 25, 1830, but there was no longer any antagonism between Romanticists and Classicists; the two parties had fused into one, and applauded together without the least discord arising between them. The passages that had formerly excited opposition were, with delicate attention, especially applauded, as if to compensate the poet for the injustice done him of yore. Time has gone by, the public has become educated little by little, and the very things that revolted it before, now are taken as a matter of course. The supposed defects have turned into beauties, and men are surprised to find themselves shedding tears over passages they laughed at, and becoming enthusiastic over others that they once hissed. The prophet did not go to the mountain, but, contrary to the Islamic legend, the mountain drew near to him.

With the lapse of time the work itself has gained a magnificent patina, the violent colouring has toned down, the harsh touches have become softened, and the fierce impasto has disappeared as under a golden varnish that softens and warms at one and the same time. It exhibits the sober richness, the masterly and broad touch seen in those portraits by Titian in which the painter to Charles V has depicted a great personage, with his coat of arms in one corner of the canvas.

In his preface to the play, the author, speaking of himself, said: "He [the author] dare not flatter himself that every one understood at the first attempt the drama itself, the real key to which is the 'Romancero general.' He begs those who have been shocked by his work to re-read the 'Cid,' 'Don Sancho of Aragon,' 'Nicomedes,' or rather the whole of Corneille and Molière, the great and admirable poets. This, after allowing for the vast inferiority of the author of 'Hernani,' may cause them to be less severe towards certain things, either in the matter or form of the drama, which may have offended them."

These few lines contain the secret of the Romanticist style, derived from Corneille, Molière, and Saint-Simon, with some touches of Shakespeare in the matter

of images. Racine alone appears classical to the refined people who, as a general rule, do not much care for the virile poets and the vigorous prose-writer I have just named. It is that form of speech which they dislike in modern poets in general, and in Hugo in particular.

It gives one the liveliest pleasure to see, after having had to endure so many melodramas and vaudevilles, this work of genius, with its characters larger than life, its mighty passions, its mad lyricism, and its action which seems to be a legend drawn from the "Romancero" and put upon the stage like that of the Cid Campeador. And especially is it delightful to listen to that beautiful, richly coloured verse, so poetic, so firm and yielding, lending itself to the rapid familiarity of the dialogue, in the course of which the retorts cross like sword-blades and strike fire, or again soaring with the wings of an eagle or a dove in moments of reverie and of love.

As the great monologue of Don Carlos before the tomb of Charlemagne was being spoken, I seemed to be ascending a stair, every step of which was a verse, leading to the top of a cathedral spire, from which the world appeared to me as in a Gothic woodcut of a

cosmography, with pointed steeples, crenelated towers, palaces, garden walls, carved roofs, zig-zagging ramparts, bombards set on their carriages, spirals of smoke, and in the background a swarming population. The poet excels in such lofty, wide views of the ideas, the appearance, or the politics of an epoch.

The play, entitled "Hernani, or Castilian honour," has for a fate *el pundonor*, the *ananke* of so many Spanish comedies. John of Aragon yields to it, but not without regret; life is so sweet to him when he hears the sound of the horn that recalls the forgotten oath; and he dies with Donna Sol rather than he redeems his pledge. But there, my old habit of analysis is running away with me again, and I am telling the story of "Hernani."

Romanticist Studies

EUGÈNE DEVÉRIA

Born in 1805 — Died in 1865

NASCENT Romanticism built the highest hopes upon Eugène Devéria. Darkness and forgetfulness have long since fallen upon his fame, which arose in a blaze of splendour, admiration, and enthusiasm. No man ever started so brilliantly or held out fairer promise. When he exhibited his "Birth of Henry IV" the French had every reason to believe that they were about to have a Paolo Veronese of their own, and that a great colourist was born unto them. The artist who thus made himself known by a masterpiece was scarcely twenty-two; he was born in 1805, and his painting bears the date 1827. Everything might be expected from so well endowed a painter, but his fine rush soon slackened; his inspiration was deadened by some mysterious influence, the expected masterpieces did not materialise, and the present generation cannot,

therefore, imagine how important was the part played by Eugène Devéria in his own day.

He was then a tall, handsome, athletic young fellow with proud, bold look. He wore his hair cropped short, fiercely curled mustaches, and a long, pointed beard, the terror of the shaven bourgeois. Beards, so generally worn nowadays, were then still considered ferocious, barbarous, and monstrous. But Romanticist painters were not in the least anxious to look like smug lawyers, and strove by every means in their power to present the strongest possible contrast to the Philistines. No Venetian of the sixteenth century was fonder of gorgeousness in dress than Eugène Devéria; he loved satins, damask, and gems, and would gladly have gone about in a brocade gown like one of the magnificoes in the paintings of Titian or Bonifazio. As he could not quite wear the costume that became his talent, he did his best to modify the hideous modern male attire. He wore coats cut well open and turned back over the shoulders, with broad shimmering velvet facings, and the chest well brought out by waistcoats cut after the fashion of a doublet. His hats were made after the pattern of Rubens'. Large rings, set with engraved stones, and huge signet-rings

shone on his fingers, and when he went forth into the streets, he gave the finishing touch to his picturesque eccentricity by draping himself in a full Spanish mantle. Such a fantastic costume would appear strange at the present day, but at that time it was considered quite a natural thing for a man to indulge in. The name of "artist" covered a multitude of sins, and every one, whether painter, poet, or sculptor did as he pleased.

Eugène Devéria's studio was situated in the Rue de l'Est, in Petitot's house, where lived also Cartellier the sculptor. Devéria shared his studio with Louis Boulanger, who was finishing his "Mazeppa" while Devéria was working at his "Birth of Henry IV." These two paintings, which were epoch-making, as among the first to carry out the theories of Romanticism, were fraternally elaborated under the same roof, but Eugène Devéria lived with his family in the Rue-Notre-Dame-des-Champs, close by Victor Hugo, in whose abode met the society that has since received the name of Cænaculum. At that time painters and poets associated a great deal and formed a mutual admiration society. Although the precept *Ut pictura poesis* was classical, the new school adopted it, and there is no doubt that every man profited by being familiar with

both these forms of art. Eugène Devéria, like Louis Boulanger, was a man of letters; he wrote prettily in verse, and was well fitted to understand the great literary revolution promoted by the author of "Odes and Ballads." At the tumultuous performances of "Hernani," to which he led a company of artists and students, he distinguished himself by the petulant warmth of his applause, and as long as the fight went on he took part in all the battles of the new school. Romanticism was at home at the Devérias', as was the saying in those days, and correctly, for there were two of them, Achille and Eugène. Achille was the elder, and had not the necessities of life compelled him to turn out work incessantly, he would certainly have left a great reputation behind him, for he was no less able than his brother. In the enormous number of his works, which will be greatly sought after by and by, and which comprise lithographs, vignettes, portraits, compositions of all kinds, the drawing is always free, flowing, personal, and marked by a Florentine elegance that denotes much skill. The whole period lives again in them, with its characteristic fashions, ways, affectations, and eccentricities. The Devéria house, therefore, was one of the foci of Romanticism, and

there were to be met Sainte-Beuve, Alfred de Musset, Fontaney, David d'Angers, Planche, Louis Boulanger, Abel Hugo, Paul Foucher, Petrus Borel, Pacini, Plantade, and many another, besides the great Master himself, who often put in an appearance.

Eugène Devéria was Girodet's pupil, though one would scarcely believe it; yet Eugène Delacroix had Guérin for master, and who would believe that? The "Birth of Henry IV" no more recalls "Atala and Chactas" than "Dante's Skiff" recalls "Marcus Sextus."

Now that the revolution is ended it is difficult to understand the effect produced by the paintings of these two young masters, the one so brilliant, the other so strong in colour; the one so bright, the other so harshly sombre, and both contrasting with the paler and paler copies of David's dying school. It is well, therefore, to replace these works in the surroundings amid which they first appeared, in order to judge of their relative as well as of their absolute value.

Delacroix was the winner; he was more energetic, more persistent, and his genius was the more complex. Eugène Devéria never surpassed his first effort, and his first attempt remained his masterpiece.

No doubt there are brilliant qualities, pleasant colouring, and prodigious facility in his "Puget showing a group to Louis XIV;" in the decoration of the chapel of Saint Geneviève in the church of Notre-Dame de Lorette; in his "Louis-Philippe in the Chamber of Deputies;" in his "Mary Stuart" on the scaffold, listening to the reading of her sentence of death; in the "Chapel of the Doms" at Avignon; but it is no longer the splendid solid Venetian colouring and the masterly handling that won fame for the artist and that will make him be remembered among the celebrities of the age. For a man's name may live in a picture as in a book; happy he, therefore, who has made a masterpiece, even if it be unique!

As I mistrusted my youthful impressions which made me think of the "Birth of Henry IV" in its fresh and novel splendour, adorned with all the witchery of colour, after the long dearth of it to which the pseudo-Classical school had condemned all men, I went to the Luxembourg, where it is hung, to look at the painting which, in 1827, struck me as so marvellous. It has perfectly stood the test of time. The patina of years has harmonised its warm, luminous colour, and to-day, as of yore, I admired the composition so cleverly

grouped in pyramidal form, the relation of the tones, the flowing, abundant matter, the true feeling for decorative painting, the lovely female heads, the dwarf carrying a parrot, and the great hound that seems to have escaped out of a painting by Paolo Veronese.

The work is painted in thick impasto, with masterly boldness, certainty, and facility. The figures are well connected together, either by a gesture or by a similarity of tone; the backgrounds are dark or light, as logic demands, behind the personages, and the whole aspect attracts by a unity which is becoming more and more rare. The "Birth of Henry IV" is no mere patchwork of parts studied out separately and then assembled anyhow, but a picture in which everything is connected, and which has been painted with the same colours and the same brush. I believe that when the prescribed time has elapsed, it will hold its place gloriously in the Salon Carré of the Louvre, the Tribuna of the French school and thus preserve from oblivion the once resounding name of Eugène Devéria.

LOUIS BOULANGER

Born in 1806 — Died in 1867

LOUIS BOULANGER was professor in the Dijon Art School, a post occupied for a time by Ziegler. He is another of the valiant privates of the Romanticist army who have fallen far from the field of battle — for, alas! the days of glorious combats are over — and who have died almost unnoticed after having blazed at their beginnings in the splendour of lightnings and beams. In those old days poets and painters lived familiarly together, and the two arts profited by continual exchange of ideas. At times the poet handled the brush, and the painter the pen. Literature was discussed in the studio, and painting in the study. Louis Boulanger was at one and the same time an artist and a man of letters, and the new school had no more fervent adherent. Every one believed that he was destined to have a brilliant future, and his splendid success at the outset justified the highest hopes.

His first painting, "Mazeppa," had won a great

triumph. It was a fiery piece of work, full of boldness and dash, splendid in colour, painted in a fashion that was inspired by Rubens and Titian, and that dazzled eyes accustomed to the dulness of the Classical school. He had also produced two large lithographs, no doubt hard to find now, the one representing the "Massacre of Saint Bartholomew" and the other "The Witches' Dance," drawn from the famous ballad. The historical scene was quite as strange and fantastic as the legendary one, but in both were to be noted the transformation of reality into chimera, and the knowledge of nocturnal terror, which are to be met with in Goya's "Caprices" only. "The Death of Bailly," a huge painting, singular in composition and grim in execution, was less suited, on account of the modern subject, to Boulanger's mediæval talent, and gave rise to violent criticism. It was charged with being hideous and monstrous, and in vain did I reply, like Macbeth's witches, "The horrible is beautiful, the beautiful is horrible;" the picture did not meet with the success of "Mazeppa." It is true that the artist had bestowed atrocious faces upon Bailly's executioners.

Devéria, Boulanger, and Delacroix were then equally famous, but Delacroix alone kept on his way to the

end; Boulanger, later on, began to doubt whether he had taken the right road, and retraced his steps as if in search of another.

He had one very uncommon defect; he carried admiration to excess. He admired the masters so passionately that he forgot his own individuality; he spent long hours in contemplating, copying, and talking of their works. Now it was Rubens, now Veronese, and now Titian; again, he crossed the Pyrenees and turned to Velasquez and Goya. The works of art rather hid the works of nature from him. But, on the other hand, he exhibited the most marvellous delicacy of tact, feeling, and intelligence when dealing with a picture or a poem. It was worth seeing him enjoy its beauties, and marking his sincere and luminous delight in a thing of beauty.

People have been somewhat unjust towards Boulanger; he may have admired too much, but he himself has not been sufficiently admired; yet "Petrarca's Triumph," was a magnificent work, and the artist deserved some of the roses cast by the maidens in front of the poet's car. "Rinaldo in Armida's Garden," "Camacho's Wedding Feast," and the paintings in the dining-room of Mme. Malher, the

sister of the famous goldsmith were, after all, marvels of grace and colouring.

For a brief moment Boulanger suffered from the disease of style, a trouble that is apt to overtake painters at the critical age and to make them blush for their youthful audacities, but a trip to Spain, when I had the pleasure of spending a few days with him, had brought him back to the right path and to the sound doctrines of Romanticism. "The Court of Miracles" and the "Gipsy Festival," exhibited in the last Salon, showed that he was still the same Louis Boulanger as in 1830. He was besides a charming talker, a delicate poet, and a clever linguist; he spoke the purest Castilian. When he died I lost one of the pleasantest companions of my younger days.

THÉODORE ROUSSEAU

Born in 1812 — Died in 1867

THÉODORE ROUSSEAU belonged to that splendid generation of 1830 which made its mark upon the future and which will be spoken of as one of the climacteric epochs of the human mind. It was as though tongues of fire had come down from heaven, on one and the same day, upon the heads of the privileged ones. Great was the ardour, great the enthusiasm, great the love of art, and equally fierce the hatred of vulgarity and the contempt for success purchased at the cost of concessions to the lack of taste of the bourgeois. Every one threw himself into the work with the most intense individuality and the maximum of effort. Every man wrought for all he was worth and cared little if he paid for success with his life, provided he attained his end. Art was being renewed in every part: poetry, the novel, the drama, painting, music gave birth to unnumbered masterpieces. Cabat had discovered nature without travelling far afield; the Beaujon Gardens, the Mont-

souris Tavern, the Duck Pond, the Moulin de la Galette had sufficed for his purpose. Flers, Cabat's master, had discovered lovely landscapes in the environs of Aumale. Théodore Rousseau, after having drawn inspiration from the hills of Sèvres and Meudon, had adventured into Fontainebleau Forest, then almost unknown, and had pitched his tent there, painting the trees, the rocks, the sky, just as if Bertin, Ridault, Watelet, and Michallon had never existed; painting trees that were not historical, rocks wherein no nymph Echo sought refuge, and skies untraversed by Venus on her car. He reproduced what he saw as it was, with its aspect, its drawing, its colour, the relation between the tones, simply, sincerely, lovingly, quite unaware that he was almost madly audacious, and that he would be taken for a barbarian, a visionary, a madman.

The privilege of truth, when it exhibits itself in its healthy nudity amid our vain appearances and our specious falsehoods, is to be considered indecent, and men straightway seek to drive it back into its well. Having once been permitted to exhibit in the salon, under a misapprehension, no doubt, Rousseau was systematically excluded from it for years. The Institute seemed to dread that this rank revolutionist would

turn society topsy-turvy. Every time his pictures were refused by the Hanging Committee, the junior press of the day broke out into howls, insults, and diatribes against the jury, which it is impossible to give any idea of. Amazing were the outrageous epithets and metaphors! I myself displayed towards these unfortunate judges a ferocity that causes me to smile to-day when by chance I come across these virulent pages, the obligatory accompaniment to the opening of every Salon in those days. It may be that the form was exaggerated, but I was right to defend liberty in art. Meanwhile Rousseau, without allowing himself to be discouraged, went on studying nature; he would surprise her in the morning, ere she was fully clothed and when she thought no one was looking at her; he watched her taking her midday siesta, and especially at even, in the gloaming, when she was about to fall asleep. He did not even leave her after night had fallen, and sought her out in those mysterious hours in the semi-transparency of the darkness. With the help of these studies, he painted bold, strong, original pictures, adding, like every great artist, his own soul to nature's. A few friends alone were acquainted with these works, which perforce long remained in his

studio, lowly and dusty, their faces to the wall, as if seeking to conceal their shame.

Fortunately there were then young fellows possessed of enthusiasm and admiration, who fell in love with a man's talent and devoted himself to his cause with a sort of fanaticism. They let slip no opportunity of singing the praises of their god, often unknown, of defending him and proclaiming him superior to all others, even going to the length of insulting his opponents, and howling against the injustice of hanging committees and the stupidity of the age. Wherever these peripatetic æsthetes met, whether on the Boulevard, in studios, or in drawing-rooms, they enlisted neophytes in their train and led them mysteriously to gaze upon the rejected masterpiece. It was in this way that I first beheld Théodore Rousseau's "The Chestnut-tree Walk." It will easily be understood that this strong, firm, vigorous and fresh painting, filled with the very life of nature and the breath of the heavens, produced a deep impression upon me. The lapse of thirty years has not diminished the remembrance of my surprise, and it was renewed when I again saw the picture, now become famous, at Khalil Bey's. It is a great satisfaction to me, in my mature years, not to have to renounce

any of the things I admired in my youth: what I then thought beautiful is beautiful still, and probably will always be so, for, in the case of many of those I have loved, posterity has already rendered its judgment. If life has not fulfilled all the promises it held out, art at least, let me do it the justice to say so, has never deceived me. Not one of the gods I worshipped has turned out to be a false god, and I may go on burning before them the incense they deserve. But alas! it is too often upon the fire of a funeral pyre that I have to cast my incense.

A landscape painter's pictures do not bear, like those of an historical painter, distinctive names. Landscape, as Rousseau conceived it, includes neither anecdotes nor historical facts; figures appear in it merely as pleasant spots of colour, and have no greater importance than they really have in nature itself, in which man disappears so swiftly. Unless in the case of some peculiarity in the scene chosen, the best title for a landscape is, after all, "Landscape" itself, and for that reason I am unable to mention Théodore Rousseau's chief works, though it was easy to do so in the case of Ingres. But posterity will find names for them, as it has done for the landscapes of Ruysdaël and Hobbema.

THÉODORE ROUSSEAU

Unlike most painters, who adopt a certain manner soon as easily recognisable as a man's handwriting, Rousseau is exceedingly varied. He employs every means of getting at the truth: sometimes he uses impasto, sometimes he rubs thinly; now he works with as much dash as if he were making a rapid sketch, now he finishes his work minutely; at one moment he chooses a scene that he presents at a certain hour, under an almost fantastic aspect, such as nature's assiduous observers often note; at another he will reproduce in simplest fashion a flat piece of country traversed by a farm road and diversified with a few poplars; or else he plunges into his favourite forest and takes an oak, of which he makes a portrait just as if it were that of an emperor or a god or a hero. Majestic and mighty still is that veteran of the forest, that monarch of the grove, worthy of being sung by Laprade, around whom have fallen the ages like the yellow leaves of autumn! At Dodona it would have uttered sacred oracles; in the Druidical wood it would have furnished a golden-sickle-bearing Velleda with mistletoe. The intense colouring of this masterpiece has already acquired the polish of agate, as experts and connoisseurs put it, and hereafter will change no more than would the colouring of a mosaic.

Although deeply original and drawing his inspiration directly from nature, Theodore Rousseau belonged to one of the families in art; he was distantly related to Gainsborough, Constable, and especially to that painter, little known on the Continent, whom the English call Old Crome. Rousseau drew well and carefully, but it is chiefly upon his colour that his fame will rest. As an artist grows old, he is apt to suffer from the disease called style, and to judge his own youthful work severely; but Rousseau, thanks to his incessant familiarity with nature, and to his own robust temperament, happily passed through that regrettable crisis, remained true to himself, and admired, without seeking to imitate them, the learned landscapes of Poussin. Rousseau may be said to be the Delacroix of landscape painting, there being between them one of those secret analogies that are felt though they cannot well be expressed.

I must be permitted here to recall a personal recollection. After having long suffered from persecution, the "Great Ever Refused," as he was called, had actually become a member of the Hanging Committee, and even chairman of that body, the transformation having been rendered possible by more equitable and more liberal conditions in the judging. The former

culprit, the convict of other days, had in his turn taken his seat on the judges' bench. I need not say what religious care, what sustained attention, what comprehensive indulgence marked his discharge of these delicate functions, the difficulty of which one can appreciate only after having performed them; and when some queer, extraordinary work, abnormal in conception or execution, was submitted to us, Rousseau, before the verdict of condemnation was pronounced, would say to those of the veterans of 1830 who, like himself, had now become members of the committee: "Let us take care, gentlemen; it may be that we are now only Romanticist fossils, Classicists of a sort."

At one of these meetings, the last one, we came out together. The recluse landscape-painter was a remarkable conversationalist, who spoke well on every subject and especially upon his own art. His old inextinguishable ardour rendered him insensible to fatigue, and after a lifetime of work that broke down the youngest, he was still bright, strong, ready to discuss theories, paradoxes, and æsthetics. We were crossing slowly the gardens in which Ledoyen has installed his kitchen, in an effective Pompeian villa, of which we caught a glimpse illumined by a sunbeam through clumps of

verdure. A tree that sprang boldly into the air, its column-like bole half hidden by ivy, struck me and I drew the great artist's attention to it. I thought the tree had an elegance of its own, a worldly and fashionable elegance, so to speak; for there are, I said, wild trees, peasant trees, bourgeois trees and dandy trees, this one belonging to the latter class. It might be considered an aristocrat of vegetation, for it appeared to have acquired the great air by watching the luxurious great world, the splendid carriages, the spirited horses, and the gorgeous costumes passing along under its shade. Trees in royal or lordly parks seem to bear coats of arms. No doubt wild nature is preferable, but there is a certain charm in cultivated nature. Why did landscape-painters never depict a park, a garden, a villa, so pleasant in its elegance even though somewhat formal?

Whereunto Théodore Rousseau replied, "It is very difficult to do so."

And on we went, continuing our conversation, through the Cours-la-Reine, the Champs-Élysées and the Tuileries, and we saw various groups of trees most happily arranged and of a beauty of form that could not have been surpassed in a virgin forest, but ever with an aristocratic stamp that was easily recognisable. The

artist's big eyes had lighted up, and already the picture to be painted was taking shape in his brain, while with uplifted finger, following the outlines, he was sketching in the main lines. Two chestnut trees that rise behind the Diana the Huntress, appeared to him suitable to form the central group or, as he called it, the key of the composition. He was full of the idea, and wished to paint the city trees, now that he had so well painted the forest trees. When we parted, he shook hands abruptly and left me saying, "I intend to paint that picture."

But he did not paint it. Man makes plans without taking death into his reckoning, and no one may be sure that he will finish the task he has begun. I did not again see Rousseau; yet who could have believed that the delightful walk of that day, filled with talk, study of nature, and friendly discussion of art, was to be the last we should have on earth? The day was lovely, and all around us smiled; the broad-shouldered painter, with his ruddy, strong face, his beard scarce streaked with a few gray hairs, seemed destined to live many long days. We felt no sad presentiment, nothing that presaged an eternal separation. Painful and sad it is to think that one parts never, perhaps, to meet again!

Now Théodore Rousseau rests in Fontainebleau, in the same graveyard where we had already gone to bury Decamps, away through the forest, on a spring morning that seemed to laugh at human grief. He desired to be laid there, near the Barbison cottage, covered with flowers and climbing plants, in which he took so much delight, and which resembled Gainsborough's cottage. May Nature grant sound sleep to her favourite painter, and may his beloved forest rain down upon him grateful shade and sunshine!

FROMENT MEURICE

Born in 1802 — Died in 1855

FROMENT MEURICE, the brother of the distinguished poet, dramatist, and journalist, Paul Meurice, was connected with the great Romanticist movement that, about the year 1830, renewed art in France, and gave birth to a legion of poets and artists, as the Renaissance had already done in the sixteenth century. Previous to that time goldsmith-work, like tragic verse, was cold, shiny, polished, and commonplace; it reproduced the old pseudo-classical forms, and the centrepieces it turned out might have figured on Astrée's table for the guests to eat lines by Crébillon out of; gems were set in flat settings or symmetrical frets that any workman could manage; silver plate affected English patterns — need I say more? The revolution begun by Wagner, a great artist belonging to the race of the Maso Finiguerras, the Benvenuto Cellinis, the Ghiubettis, the Aldegravers, the Albert Dürers, was

continued by Froment Meurice who caused it to triumph.

In that brilliant group of poets, painters, sculptors, and musicians, Froment Meurice, and it is a great honour, will be the goldsmith. He has chased the thoughts that the strong generation sang, painted, carved, or modelled. He has added to the trophy of nineteenth-century art a wreath formed of brilliant golden leaves, with flowers of imperishable diamonds. In one of his charming smaller odes Victor Hugo has called him the sculptor of gems, while Balzac, the Dante of "The Human Comedy," never fails to clasp on the arm of his courtesans, or of his high-born ladies, of his Duchesses of Maufrigneuse, or of his Aurélie Shontzes, a bracelet, the work of Froment Meurice. Every time that poets, novelists, or critics have to speak of refined luxury, of art that is at once rare and delicate, it is his name that recurs in their pages. If perchance fortune knocks at the door of an artist who has hitherto had only the cup of imagination to drink out of, he forthwith goes to order champagne icing-pails of the goldsmith who so readily enters into every fancy.

Froment Meurice did not execute much of the work himself, although he handled the boaster, the chisel,

and the hammer most skilfully. He invented, sought new designs, drew, discovered admirable combinations; he was particularly successful as manager of his workshop, and in inspiring his workmen. He has marked every piece of his work with his thought, if not with his hand. Like the leader of an orchestra, he inspired and led a whole company of sculptors, draughtsmen, ornament workers, engravers, enamellers, and jewellers; for the master goldsmith cannot afford the time, nowadays, to put on a working-apron and to compel the metal to assume diverse forms. Pradier, David, Feuchères, Cavelier, Préault, Schoenwerk, Pascal, Rouillaud have each and all been translated by Froment Meurice into gold, silver, and oxidised iron. He has reproduced their statues on breast-pins, cane-handles, candelabra, and vase-stands, enwreathing them with garlands of enamels, flowers, and gems, giving Truth a diamond for mirror, bestowing wings of sapphire upon angels, and clusters of rubies for grapes upon Erigone. And he never sought to appropriate any one's fame, well aware as he was that his own was great enough, and when he exhibited, he always frankly stated the names of his collaborators, whether artists or artisans.

It would take long to recapitulate the numerous works which won for Froment Meurice the reputation he has left behind him: centrepieces, toilet-sets, ewers, caskets, jewel-cases, Byzantine reliquaries, monstrances, chalices, cups, shields, seals, rings, bracelets, necklaces, snuff-boxes. He managed to vary indefinitely these fanciful creations of the world of ornament in which a female figure springs from the calyx of a flower, a monster ends in foliage, a salamander writhes in flames formed of rubies, a lizard disappears in grass made of emeralds, and arabesques delight in involved interlacings and complications; under the silver Nereids with hair of green gold, he has caused to swell waves of mother-of-pearl, pearls, and coral; he has placed under the feet of terrestrial nymphs a ground of diamonds, topazes, and fine gems; he has mingled metal vine-leaves with ivory grape-gatherers; set miniature harvesters in snuff-boxes, and turned his shop into a den as splendid as Aladdin's grotto, the Treasury of the Caliph Haroun al Raschid, Abul Kasim's well, or the Grüne Gewölbe at Dresden. The blood-stained bouquet of diamonds that Cardillac won back at the dagger's point was reset by Froment Meurice, as it had erstwhile been, as brilliant, as light, and as sparkling with

fascinating rays, and, less cruel than Louis XIV's cruel jeweller, he did not assassinate its fortunate owner.

A goldsmith works for emperors, popes, kings, princes, and the rich on earth only; yet Froment Meurice, who counted among his customers Pius IX, Emperor Nicholas, Queen Marie-Amélie, Queen Victoria, the Duchess of Parma, the Duchess of Orleans, the Duke de Montpensier, the Count of Paris, Emperor Napoleon III, Prince Napoleon, Prince Demidoff, the Duke de Luynes, the Duke de Noailles, Rothschild, Véron, and Mlle. Rachel, had thought of putting the lovely art of jewellery within the reach of all women. He wished that every beauty, even though not rich, and without having to degrade herself, should be able to own ear-rings, a brooch, and a bracelet in the most exquisite taste, the workmanship of which should be more precious than the gold of which they were made, and with this in view he studied the great modern discovery — galvanoplastics, the marvellous process by means of which the goldsmith is replaced by electricity, and the finest models can be reproduced in endless numbers at a very low cost.

BARYE

THE Romanticist revolution which was prepared under the Restoration and which broke out in 1830, made itself felt less in sculpture than in the other arts. The painters followed the poets, but statuary remained almost impassible in its marmorean serenity. The Greeks seem to have once and for all fixed its laws, the conditions under which it is produced, and the ideal it must seek to attain. It is not too much to say that that noble, that pure art still lives to-day upon the tradition of antiquity, and that it degenerates whenever it departs from it. Yet here also the regenerating movement made itself felt; a few bold spirits believed that it was possible to introduce more naturalness in the old conventional mould, even if it were to crack in consequence. David d'Angers, Auguste Préault, Antonin Moine, Maindron, Triqueti, Mlle. Fauveau, and Barye were, among sculptors, the representatives of the new movement in favour of originality and freedom. The opposition they met with was even fiercer than that

with which poets and painters had to contend, for statuary, accustomed to and needing the nude, and borrowing almost all its subjects from the lives of heroes, from mythology and allegory, has forcibly to remain classical and pagan. It loves to represent form under the guise of Truth rising out of its well, and in the way of clothing it is unwilling to admit anything more than drapery, which does not fetter nudity. In complex and troubled times like our own, this setting aside of passion, of the accidental, of colour, this immovable calm readily lead to coldness and weariness. Composition in statuary is confined to eurhythmy in attitudes, to the balancing of lines, to the equipoise of contours; and the seeking after beauty precludes any characteristic violence. As it travels along this path, in a civilisation unfavourable to it, the antique speedily degenerates into the classical, the classical into the academic, and the academic into mere inferior imitation. All that is then obtained is a series of casts in which the original forms are more and more softened away.

In this struggle of new ideas on one side and of routine on the other, Barye proved to be one of the most courageous, most resolute, and most persevering

combatants. Born in 1796, he entered art through the gate of trade. When he was thirteen years old, he was apprenticed to Fourier, an engraver on steel, whose specialty was the cutting of dies for military badges. In 1812, he was taken as a conscript and served for a time in the surveying branch of the Engineers. Some plans in relief drawn by him at that period are even now preserved. After 1814 he resumed his former occupation, but at the same time he drew, modelled, and studied. His masters were Bosio and Gros, for Barye's talent was of that complex nature that is not confined to one form of art. He handles the painter's brush as skilfully as the sculptor's boaster, and I have seen water-colours by him that were remarkable for their strength and character. He thus prepared himself for the great competitive examination at the École des Beaux-Arts in the branches of engraving and statuary. Considering the talent he has shown since that time, and which no one disputes, it might be supposed that he triumphed easily; but either his talent was still in germ only, or the judges were not clever enough to perceive it, for he obtained no more than honourable mention in engraving and two second prizes in sculpture. He did not continue

his fruitless attempts, and, abandoning the school, he set about following his own inspiration, and it is quite possible that his failure was, so far as his individuality was concerned, a fortunate thing for him.

Forced to work for his living, he had to accept trade orders, which he carried out in a new manner that transformed them into artistic works. Very speedily he acquired unrivalled skill in the production of bronzes, the models of which he invented himself and which he cast in *cire perdue*, by the old Florentine process. He was thoroughly familiar with every detail of the mixing, the casting, the chasing, the putting on of a patina, and the great artist in him was served by the practical skill of the expert workman that he was also. I lay stress upon this fact, because most contemporary sculptors, taking thought for the ideal part of their art only, leave their subject, after they have modelled it in clay or wax, to be executed by their assistants, who cannot possibly give that final touch which is the very feeling of the artist himself. What these statues, mathematical reproductions of their models, lack is the last surfacing, the bloom of the epiderm, the palpitation of life, which is less important perhaps in marble than in bronze, the ductile

metal reproducing even the faint marks made by the finger on the clay.

Barye was long considered to be simply an animal sculptor, so quick are we in France to shut an artist up within a specialty, which it delights us to restrict more and more. Yet he had first made his appearance, at the Salon of 1827, as the sculptor of busts that proved he could portray a man as well as a lion. Excluded from the Salon of 1836, at the same time as Eugène Delacroix, Théodore Rousseau, Corot, Préault, Maindron and many another, by a committee then composed exclusively of members of the Institute hostile to the new ideas, he withdrew to his tent, as the saying is, not discouraged, but simply to avoid exposing himself to renewed affronts. A character like Barye, so robust, energetic, and patient, is not easily discouraged. Prevented from enjoying the benefits of exhibitions and of official orders, he brought out a great number of bronzes, both large and small, that added to his already great reputation, which had rapidly spread from the ranks of artists, who are first to appreciate anything. Barye did not, it is true, need to swell his fame by the interest that attaches to the victim of an unjust exclusion, but the martyr's crown, which he had not sought, did

not hurt him, and all the more did the public admire the manly, courageous artist who, in the silence and solitude of his studio, and lacking all government encouragement, wrought and multiplied works stamped with the seal of a strong originality.

Barye did not treat animals merely as a naturalist might do it; he was not satisfied with representing them with their characteristic traits and in their usual attitudes; he brought out their beauty and their peculiarities, seeking main lines, broad effects, splendid ports, proud outlines, well-balanced poses, just as if he were working at human portraits. Let me hasten to add that his thorough study of osteology, of the muscular system, of the nature of the coats and hides, and his prolonged observations of the living animals, his familiar acquaintance with their manners, their characters, and their ways, enabled him to conciliate nature and the ideal.

Let no one imagine that he produced academic lions and conventional tigers; it is easy to see the contrary by casting a glance at the great carved poodles, placed upon pedestals at the corners of the terraces and of the steps in public gardens. They wear marble periwigs in the fashion of the days of Louis XIV, the

curls of which, neatly smoothed, fall down their backs. Their debonair faces, almost human in expression, resemble the make-up of heavy fathers in the old style comedies; their flaccid bodies, rounded, boneless, nerveless, and filled with bran, one would say, are devoid of suppleness and vigour, while their raised paws rest upon a ball with not very lion-like gesture.

Tremendous, therefore, was the sensation produced by the "Lion and Serpent," which is perhaps Barye's masterpiece. At the sight of this formidable and superb animal, with its wild, bristling mane, anger and disgust curling back its lips, its brazen claws holding firm the hideous reptile writhing in powerless rage, all the wretched marble lions stuck their tails between their legs and nearly let go the ball that aids them to keep up appearances. Barye's was a genuine lion from the Atlas, superbly tawny, with unconquered muscles, and no trace of the academic smile in his fierce grin. Transported from the desert to the Tuileries, it caused fear like a real lion, and one would have preferred to see it in a cage, had not the green patina on the bronze reassured one and shown that it lived only the formidable life of art. The "Lion at



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The "Lion and Serpent," which is perhaps Barye's masterpiece

rest," intended as a companion piece, recalls by the solemn tranquillity of its attitude and the sweep of the lines, the giant marble lions of Piræus, that were intended to draw Cybele's car, and which Morosini, the Peloponnesian, caused to be transported to Venice, where they now guard the gates of the Arsenal.

No less marked was the success of the "Tiger devouring a Crocodile." How strong, how grim is that contracted, arched back, quivering with satisfied greed, the paws, with prominent angles, the protruding hips, the heaving flanks, the lashing tail! How piteously the poor scaly monster writhes with pain in the grasp of those claws sharp as dagger-points! Never was the combat between things in nature, never was the fatality of destruction rendered more profoundly and more powerfully.

The mere mention of "Bears fighting," the "Bear in its Trough," a "Horse struck down by a Lion," a "Dead Gazelle," an "Asiatic Elephant," a "Jaguar devouring a Hare," suffices to remind every one of those groups, so full of life and of dash and so admirably wrought out. At the very least one knows the centrepiece made to the order of the Duke of Orleans, from the designs of Chenevard, comprising hunts in

nine different parts of the world, — an admirable theme that enabled Barye to mingle together, with picturesque fury, men, lions, tigers, and elephants.

During the long years of his exclusion from the Salon, Barye produced the "Three Graces," "Angelica and Medora," "Theseus fighting the Minotaur," and a number of equestrian statuettes that require only to be enlarged to look as well on a public square as the statues of Gattamelata and General Colleoni, for, I do not hesitate to repeat it, Barye is not only an admirable sculptor of animals, he is a sculptor in the fullest meaning of the word, of the highest taste and the noblest style. This was well seen in 1850, when he returned to the Salon, a triumphal return, and when he took, his place with the assent of all men, the front rank in which he had so long deserved to be. The "Centaur tamed by one of the Lapithæ" gave proof that the Romanticist whom the committee had proscribed was the modern sculptor who came nearest to Phidias and to Greek sculpture. The man, with his simple, robust form, ideally handsome, and true to nature, might have figured on the Parthenon pediment, by the side of the Ilissus, while the Centaur might have played his part in the cavalcades on the metopes.

People were amazed that an artist who modelled animals so well should prove so successful in turning out men and heroes, just as though form were not one and the same, in spite of its apparent diversity, and could possibly refuse to yield its secrets to so keen-sighted an observer as Barye.

The sculptor of lions recently executed four groups in the round for the Louvre pavilions: "Peace," "War," "Force protecting Work," and "Order repressing the Wicked." The figures in these groups are happily combined with animals that bring out the allegorical meaning, and are marked by the quiet lines and the monumental serenity that best suit sculpture in conjunction with architecture.

Barye, who is at this time in the full enjoyment of a green old age, has a calm, strong, gentle face, on which his hard struggles have left no trace of bitterness, but on which it is easy to make out, behind the gentleness, a resolute will that nothing can discourage, and the modest consciousness of the man of talent who has long ago learned to dispense with praise, while the strong frame promises to be equal to many more years of work.

HIPPOLYTE MONPOU

Born in 1804 — Died in 1841

IF there be a composer to whom poets ought to be grateful, it is unquestionably Hippolyte Monpou. Far from preferring meaningless words, he bravely selected the finest verse, the most complex and the most difficult rhythms. Nothing dismayed him, not even fitful metres, echoing rimes, or the mediæval counter-echoes of "Odes and Ballads." He managed to draw from all these things unexpected melodies and strange effects, blamed by some, applauded by others. Eccentric as he was he had become popular, thanks to "The Andalusian," "My good Ship," and "The Madman of Toledo." He was a Romanticist and literary composer; brought up in Choron's school, he had studied attentively the compositions of the great masters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and thus contracted a certain taste for the archaic, a figured style in strong contrast with modern habits. This also accounted for the lack of symmetry in his rhythm, for his overflows and his suspensions of the cæsura, so that,

better than any one else, he was fitted to set to music the verses of the innovators whom the reading of the ancients and of Ronsard had made enemies of well turned periods.

Hippolyte Monpou, like the poets whose lines he translated, was considered by the middle class a crazy loon, a madman who ought to have been muzzled instead of being permitted to sing as he pleased. Every time he sat down to the piano, his eyes blazing, his mustache bristling, a circle of apprehensive people formed respectfully around him; no sooner had he sung the first few lines of "The Andalusian Maid" than the mothers posted their daughters off to bed and plunged their noses, coloured with the flush of modest shame, into their nosegays. The music caused as much terror as the words, but little by little people got used to it; only, "golden skin" was substituted for "golden breasts," and "She is the mistress I have won" for "She is my mistress, my lioness," which struck hearers, in those days, as too dreadfully bestial and monstrous.

Innumerable songs, each lovelier than its predecessor, and several of which have become popular, spread the author's reputation and enabled him at last to reach the

stage, the great desire of his heart. "The Lute-maker of Vienna," "The Two Queens," "Piquillo" — the pretty libretto of which was the joint work of Alexandre Dumas and Gérard de Nerval — "The Planter," and "Chaste Suzannah" followed in rapid succession, and death found Monpou working at the unfinished score of "Lambert Simnel." This work, which gives evidence of great progress on the composer's part, was completed by Adolphe Adam with delicacy and discretion, and with artistic conscientiousness and piety that do credit to his heart and his skill alike. It was performed at the Opéra-Comique, where it won a great and well deserved success.

I am not of those who wait until after a man's death to discover that he was possessed of genius; I do not care overmuch for posthumous admiration, and what I am saying of Monpou now that he is but dust, I would have said of him when he walked on the Boulevard, smoking his cigar and turning some air over in his mind. "Lambert Simnel" contains passages that might figure in the works of any one of the masters, and which, in order to be proclaimed admirable, need only to be a score of years older and signed with a foreign name. It is of little impor-

tance that the matter of Monpou's operas was not very novel.

He was very fond of ballads, and hunted them out in the works of every poet of his day. He used up the whole of Alfred de Musset, and I can still remember hearing Monpou sing "Have you seen in Barcelona —," with the greatest spirit, and with poses and gestures like those of Hoffmann's fantastic musicians. Kreisler would have seemed cold by comparison with him. He sought after originality, and often came upon it. Never was a composer more passionately, more enthusiastically in love with his art; never did any one spare himself less. When he was at the piano and felt that he had been understood and appreciated, he would say, "What do you think of this one?" And he would go on, to our great delight, until the candles had burned down to their sockets.

He was as great believer as the rest of us in serenades, alcaldes, mantillas, guitars, and castanets, — in all that conventional Italy and no less conventional Spain made fashionable by the author of "Don Paëz," "Portia," and "The Marquesa d'Amaegui." He set these rollicking, hare-brained couplets, cheeky as pages, to mad, sparkling music, full of strange cries and pro-

longed notes after the Andalusian manner that fairly delighted us. Victor Hugo's thoroughly Spanish "guitarra," "Gastibelza, the man with the rifle," had inspired Monpou with a wild, plaintive air, of the strangest character, that long remained popular, and that no Romanticist, if there be any Romanticists left, can possibly have forgotten. The poets were very fond of him, for he respected their words and did not disturb the economy of their carefully wrought stanzas. Monpou loved difficult rhythms, and maintained that new motives were suggested by little-used breaks. In a word, he was one of us, and, as it were, the Berlioz of song.



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Homage to Berlioz

HECTOR BERLIOZ

Born in 1803 — Died in 1870

HARD, troubled, and adverse was his fate. As Théophile de Viau, the poet, says of himself, he was born "under a stormy star." His craft was constantly swept by the billows and the winds, half smothered in foam, struck by lightning, driven from its haven and borne back into the offing as it was on the point of making port. But it was directed by a resolute will, that the very destruction of the universe could not have shaken, and that, in spite of sails torn to ribbons, masts carried away, and a hull leaking in every seam, steadily kept on its way to the realisation of its ideal.

No man ever was so absolutely devoted to art or so wholly sacrificed his life to it. In hours of uncertainty, of doubt, of concession to the world, of self-despair, of inclination to attain success by different means, Hector Berlioz never for an instant listened to the base tempter that, in moments of discouragement, bends over the artist's chair and whispers prudent

advice in his ear. His faith remained unimpaired, and even in his darkest hours, maugre indifference, raillery, and poverty, never once did it occur to him to win popularity by some commonplace melody, by some vulgar strain set to the rhythm of a country-dance. Notwithstanding all difficulties, he clung faithfully to his conception of beauty. It may be questioned whether he was a great genius, for differences of opinion are universal, but no one can deny that he was a man of great character.

In the Renaissance of 1830, he represents the Romanticist ideal in music, that is, the breaking of the old moulds, the substitution of new forms for the old invariable squared rhythms, the complex and elaborate richness of orchestration, faithfulness to local colour, unexpected effects of sonority, tumultuous and Shakespearian depth of passion, amorous or melancholy reveries, undefined and mysterious feelings which speech cannot express, and that something beyond all these things, which words cannot render and that notes help one to understand.

Hector Berlioz attempted to do in music what the poets of that day were trying to do in verse, and he did it with an energy, an audacity, and an amount of

originality that provoked more astonishment than admiration. The musical education of the French was far from having reached the point to which it has attained nowadays. Habeneck, who was devoted to high art, ventured from time to time upon one or two of the least *unintelligible* of Beethoven's symphonies, which were considered barbaric, uncivilised, mad, and unfit to be performed, although they were performed, while the Classicists of the day maintained that these symphonies were no more music than Victor Hugo's verse was poetry or Delacroix's paintings were painting. In order to render Weber's "Der Freyschütz" acceptable, Castil-Blaze was obliged to disguise it under the title of "Robin Hood" and to add a good deal of his own to it. Rossini himself, with his luminous and smiling facility, passed in the opinion of many for a musical law-breaker, a dangerous innovator who was corrupting the noble simplicity of the masters of his art. He was reproached with noisy orchestration, with using the brasses to make a din, with indulging in thunderous crescendos. So it can easily be understood that in such an environment Berlioz did not meet with much encouragement. Happily, he was of the breed of men who can dispense with suc-

cess; he had been drawn to his art by an irresistible vocation.

The son of a physician, and intended to be a physician himself, he abandoned the Medical School for the Conservatoire, where he studied under Reicha and Lesueur. His allowance was cut off, and he was compelled to enter the chorus at the Théâtre des Nouveautés, with a salary of fifty francs a month, which sufficed to provide for the material needs of a life wholly devoted to art.

His horror of vulgar formulæ, his feeling for description, his intelligence of nature, and his desire to make his art express what it had not yet expressed, made Hector Berlioz a true Romanticist, and as such he took his part in the great battle, in which he fought with incredible resolution.

He had already written a mass for four voices, with choruses and orchestral accompaniment, an overture to "Waverley," and the "Fantastic Symphony," the latter a sort of musical autobiography in which the voices and whispers of the orchestra tell of the artist's dreams, loves, sorrows, despairs, nightmares, and mad nervous terrors. It was greatly admired and applauded by the Romanticist phalanx, and produced at that time

a sensation comparable to that caused by the performance of the first compositions by Richard Wagner. The performance of "Tannhäuser" at the Opera is a perfect illustration of the kind of success that awaits any new work in our country. Violent discussions were carried on by both parties, and politeness often suffered, for in matters of art men become even more excited than in politics. Although Berlioz was generally considered as being out of his mind, he nevertheless inspired the terror caused by every individual known to be possessed of secret power. Amid his eccentricities, his obscurities, his exaggerations, there was plainly to be seen a resolute and unbending energy; even then he had the steadfastness of primitive strength, and he resembled that pantheistic character in the second part of "Faust" whom Goethe calls "Oreas, a rock by nature."

The public very generally believes that Romanticists, whether poets, painters, or composers, have thrown off the yoke of rules either because they have never learned these rules or because they are so unskilful that they feel fettered by them. Nothing can be more erroneous. The innovators were one and all deeply versed in the technique of their respec-

tive arts. A man must know much before he can reform. Every one of the so-called wild-haired, uncurbed artists who, so it was alleged, wrote only under the influence of delirium, were on the contrary consummate contrapuntists, each one in his own sphere, and perfectly capable of ending a fugue in the most regular fashion. The rigorous care for form and colour, the difficulties of composition, and the novelty of details, which were self-imposed, called for infinitely greater work than submission to the recognised old rules, that were, besides, so often ignored.

Thus Hector Berlioz' Romanticism did not prevent his winning the prize for musical composition, and carrying off the "grand prix de Rome" with his cantata "Sardanapalus,"— a splendid subject, from which Byron had drawn a poem and Delacroix a painting. This was in 1830, and Berlioz composed, in honour of the men who fell during the revolution in July, a funeral and triumphal march of the noblest character. I can still remember, with a thrill of enthusiasm, the passage describing the entrance of the heroes' souls into heaven, to the sound of loud bursts of music in which the voices of the angels were heard above the already distant acclaim of men.

He then left for Italy, having already, though still but a student, acquired the renown of a master. He was not greatly taken with Italian music, with its little regard for harmony and its easy melodies, which take no account of the words or of the situation, and which, agreeable in themselves, apart from their meaninglessness, are embroidered upon a uniform background, like the delicate arabesques on the walls of Pompeii. The grandeur and beauty of Italy, however, did strongly influence him, and left upon his mind a lasting impression of picturesqueness, though the works he composed during his stay in Rome show that his mind was elsewhere. In the Villa Medici, under the spreading pines of the Pamphili or Borghese gardens, or in the solitary Campus, it was of Shakespeare, of Goethe, of Walter Scott that he thought, and there he composed his "Return to Life," his "Fisherman's Ballad," the Ghost scene in "Hamlet," and the overtures to "King Lear" and "Rob Roy."

No trace of his stay in Italy is to be found in the works he composed at this time; he preferred Germany, to which he was unable to go. At the performances of the English actors, which, like the passionate admirer of Shakespeare that he was, he attended con-

stantly, by dint of seeing her fill the parts of Ophelia, Cordelia, Portia, and other charming heroines so tender and romantic, he fell in love with Miss Smithson, an actress of great talent and beauty, whom he married, and whose illness it was, on his return from Rome, that prevented his visiting the land of Bach, Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven. Heinrich Heine relates that Berlioz, in the days of his love affair, desiring to see the lady of his dreams nearer, and also, it may be, because he had not the money to pay for an orchestra stall night after night, had taken an engagement as kettle-drummer in the orchestra, and frantically pummelled his kettle-drums, just as Freiligrath's negro king used to beat his drum; and this especially when the beloved actress made her tragedy-queen entrances.

The symphony "Harold," which he composed at about this time, was received more favourably than has been the case with his later works. The Pilgrims' March in it was encored and obtained a success like that of the Pilgrims' Chorus in "Tannhäuser" at the present day. It should not be inferred from this that this part was superior to the rest of the work, which contains beauties of the first rank, but the particular rhythm of a march enables those who need to have the

lines of a poem scanned for them, and the time of a score clearly marked, to appreciate more easily the musical thought.

While Berlioz had many detractors and many who refused to acknowledge his talent, he had one partisan whose competency in matters musical none could deny: Paganini, the violin fiend, the violin angel, who was accused of having shut up the soul of one of his mistresses in the sonorous box of his instrument. That inimitable and fantastic artist, who made one believe in the power of incantations, was a passionate admirer of Berlioz, and he, the miser, of whom tales were told that made Harpagon seem prodigal, becoming as generous as an Oriental potentate, sent Berlioz twenty thousand francs by way of acknowledgment of the noble pleasure he had derived from that work.

I cannot, of course, follow Berlioz' musical career composition by composition in these few pages. He tried the stage, and his "Benvenuto Cellini" was performed at the Opera. The libretto was by Émile Deschamps and Auguste Barbier; the delicately wrought music was full of the loveliest bits and of the most original motives, but it had been decreed that Berlioz was not melodious; and in spite of the lovely air,

"Melancholy," so well sung by Mme. Stoltz, who took the part of Ascanio; the beautiful song of the gold chasers: —

> "The metals be subterranean blooms
> That ope but on the brows of queens,
> Of popes, and eke of emperors;"

of the suave and broad andante of Cellini: —

> "Would that upon the wildest hills
> A simple shepherd lad were I!"

and the plaintively graceful ballad: —

> "Happy all the sailors be
> As they roam upon the sea;"

in spite of the lively tumult of the Carnival that rang through the opera, the work had but three or four performances. Nowadays, when so many insignificant, old-fashioned works, so desperately commonplace in conception and execution, are being revived, it would be a good deal better to revive that bold, original, thoroughly novel work, which would be welcomed at present, and which might have the luck to win posthumous renown.

Berlioz was not discouraged, but as he felt that success

on the operatic stage must be paid for by concessions repugnant to his lofty nature, he confined himself to dramatic symphonies, such as "The Damnation of Faust" and "Romeo and Juliet," which he had performed at his own expense on that ideal stage where neither scenery nor costumes are needed, and on which the poet's fancy reigns supreme. "The Damnation of Faust" contains precisely what is lacking in Gounod's "Faust," in other respects a remarkable work; namely, sinister and mysterious depths, a darkness wherein glimmers faintly the star of the microcosm, the utter powerlessness of human knowledge in presence of the unknown, the diabolical irony of negation, and the weariness of the spirit springing towards matter. Unquestionably Faust, as Goethe conceived it, has never been better understood. I have the pleasantest remembrance of the garden scene, and the Infernal March that gallops along upon a Hungarian theme won an immense success. Then how many beautiful and insufficiently appreciated passages there are in "Romeo and Juliet"! — the ball in the house of Capulet, Queen Mab's scherzo and serenade, in which the composer rivals the poetry, the lightness, and the grace of the witty Mercutio, whom Shakespeare could not carry

to the end of the play, and whom he causes to be slain by Paris after a few brilliant scenes.

Berlioz was not only a composer of the first order, he was also a writer of uncommon sense, wit, and humour. For a long time he was the musical critic of the *Journal des Débats*, in which he maintained his views, attacked everything that struck him as being vulgar, and sang the praises of his gods, Gluck and Beethoven, in honour of whom he erected white marble altars as to immortals. But he never spoke of his articles, that attracted so much attention, save with secret bitterness. It is as grievous to a composer to put down his lyre for the pen as for the poet to lay aside poetry for prose for the sake of a livelihood, for the painter to make lithographs bring him in what his pictures should do. That is a woe we each of us have known, and it is by no means the least endurable. Every hour given up to such tasks is perchance an hour of immortality of which one robs one's self, and who can say that time thus lost will ever be recovered? Besides, when incessant labour shall have earned some leisure for one towards the end of one's days, will one have the strength then to carry out the conceptions evolved in youth? Will it be possible ever again to

revive the vanished flame, to recompose the vision that forgetfulness has borne away ?

These be the sorrows of the great-hearted artist, and this was the source of the tragic melancholy, the Promethean melancholy from which Berlioz suffered. He felt that he was a Titan capable of scaling high heaven and of standing face to face with Jupiter; yet he was condemned to remain nailed with diamond nails, by Force and Power, to the cross on Caucasus, like the hero of Æschylus, while the vulture gnawed at his heart. Nor did he even have the consolation of seeing the two thousand Oceanids, borne on winged chariots, coming to weep at the foot of his mountain.

"The Childhood of Christ," an oratorio charming in its simplicity, and in which the music lisps the first words of the new-born God, accompanied by the song of the angels, seemed to have been better understood by the public.

Berlioz' friends, as they saw the fairly numerous spectators, would say to him, "Well, they are coming at last!" To which Berlioz would reply with a melancholy smile, "Yes, they are coming; but I — I am going."

His last attempt was the opera "The Trojans," performed at the Théâtre-Lyrique. He had written the libretto himself, disdaining, like Wagner, to apply to a professional libretto writer. He believed, as did Gluck, that in an opera the words and the music should be closely bound together, and he did not approve of those breaks in the form of airs and cavatinas that stop the action. This opera, so different from what the public is accustomed to, contains great beauties; it is filled with a broad, pure feeling for antiquity, and at times there passes through it, sonorous as a trumpet-call, a wind of Homeric poetry.

If he had not attained popularity in France, where, however, he counted ardent admirers, he had long before become popular abroad. In Germany he was known and applauded, and there he was reckoned one of the great modern masters. But day by day he became more sombre and bitter; sorrow was changing more and more deeply his noble face, like unto the face of an angry eagle, eager to dart into space but prevented from flying. His long, fair hair, that he used to shake so madly of yore as he conducted some masterpiece, had long since grown white. Stoic of art as he was he could not bear up under the death of a son

he worshipped, though he had suffered so patiently for the sake of the beautiful, and though his self-love must have bled many a time. He wrapped himself up in shadow and silence, and then he died. It is only the grim and haughty that can love like that.

MADAME DORVAL

Born in 1801 — Died in 1849

MADAME DORVAL died of over sensitiveness, of passion, of enthusiasm, of too free a giving out of her soul, of burning the oil too fast in a blazing lamp, of the indifference, the disdain of the directors of certain important theatres, of the silence which was settling around her name, once so famous, and especially of regret for the child she had lost, for as that great poet, Victor Hugo, says: —

"Their little arms draw you strongly to the tomb."

I was scarcely acquainted with Mme. Dorval, yet I feel as if I had lost an intimate friend. A portion of my soul and of my youth has gone down into the grave with her; for when one has long followed the career of an actress in the varied parts she has played on the stage, when one has loved, suffered, and wept as she loved, suffered, and wept under the names given her by poets' fancy, there is set up between her, a radiant figure, and the spectator lost in the shadow a magnetic

relation that it is difficult not to believe must be reciprocal. When the beloved lips speak your heart's secret thoughts in the verse of the master you admire, verse that you repeat with her, it seems as though it is for yourself alone that she speaks thus, for you alone that she has discovered those inflections of the voice that move a whole audience, for you alone that she has selected that particular part, that she has put a rose in her hair, a black velvet ribbon on her arm. As she realises the poet's dream, she becomes, for the critic, a sort of ideal mistress, the only one, perchance, whom he can love. Alfred de Musset's lines —

> "If true it be that Schiller loved none but Amelia,
> Goethe none but Marguerite, Rousseau none but Julia,
> May they rest in peace — for love they did!" —

are just as applicable to critics as to poets.

Adèle d'Hervey, Kitty Bell, Marion de Lorme, you have all lived, so far as I was concerned, a real life; you were no mere painted ghosts, separated from me by a row of lights; I believed in your love, in your tears, in your despair; never did my own griefs clutch at my heart and draw tears from my eyes as did yours, and if I survived your nightly death, it was because I hoped to see you again on the morrow sadder, more

plaintive, more passionate, and more entrancing than ever. Ah! how jealous of Antony, Chatterton, and Didier I have been!

A great void is felt when the things that have been the passion of one's youth disappear one after another. How shall one again renew the emotion, the fury, the transports, the boundless devotion to art, the capacity for admiration, the absolute freedom from envy, characteristic of that splendid time, of that great Romanticist movement which, like the movement of the Renaissance, renovated art in all its parts, and brought out at one and the same time Lamartine, Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, Alfred de Musset, Sand, Balzac, Sainte-Beuve, Auguste Barbier, Delacroix, Louis Boulanger, Ary Scheffer, Devéria, Decamps, David d'Angers, Barye, Hector Berlioz, Frédérick Lemaître, and Mme. Dorval, the latter of whom too soon vanished from the midst of that brilliant Pleiades, of which she was not one of the least luminous stars!

Frédérick Lemaître, whom I have just named, and Mme. Dorval formed a perfectly assorted dramatic couple. She was the true wife of Frédérick, just as Frédérick was truly her husband — on the stage, I mean. Their respective talents completed each other

and grew the greater by their combination. Frédérick was the man to make that woman weep; and how wonderfully, on the other hand, she knew the way to move him when his madness was overpast! What accents she drew from him! Whoever has not seen them together, in "The Gamester," for instance, or in "Peblo" or in "The Gardener of Valencia," has seen nothing; and can know fully neither Frédérick nor Mme. Dorval. And to-day Frédérick must feel that he is a widower in very truth.

The Théâtre-Français must feel remorse at never having secured that great actress, as by and by it will regret having allowed Frédérick Lemaître, an actor greater and mightier than Talma, to degenerate at the Porte-Saint-Martin or to tour the provinces.

I have at least the consolation of knowing that the tributes which, like mourning flowers, I place on the tomb of the great actress, I paid her before she was laid in her bier, and that while she lived she had the satisfaction of enjoying my comprehensive and passionate admiration, my enthusiastic praise, a nectar sweeter to artists than the rarest wine offered them in chased cups. I am not a mere posthumous panegyrist who praises those only who have passed away, and who is

willing to allow man or woman every possible quality once he or she is safely nailed up in his or her coffin. Why should not one be at once, as regards contemporaries endowed with talent or genius, of the same opinion as posterity will be? Why should one be satisfied with addressing lyrical effusions to their shades?

I first remember Mme. Dorval in the first performance of "Marion de Lorme." She had just passed from melodrama to drama, from the dialect of the Boulevard to poetry. And how proud and happy and radiant she was! How thoroughly at home she seemed to be in that part of tremendous passion and of such high grade! How easily she soared on steady wings, upborne by the Master's mighty breath! I can still see her with her long fair hair adorned with pearls, her white satin dress, and her maid, Dame Rose, disrobing her. The last part in which I saw her was that of Marie-Jeanne, another Marie, the name, her own, which so well suited her. She was no longer the brilliant courtesan purified and softened by love, but the poor woman of the people, the Mother of Sorrows of the *faubourg*, with the seven swords piercing her breast, like the Virgin on Calvary.

Her natural talent, which she had somewhat im-

perilled by attempting tragedy in Ponsard's "Lucrèce," for instance, required if not elevated dramatic poetry, at least simple and touching truth. The poor lady, unlearned in the subjects of the many discussions of the day and obeying only the dictates of her heart, had for a moment given way to doubt and hesitation; she had allowed herself to follow the Common Sense school, and had sought to declaim visions like a tragic actress at the Théâtre-Français. Fortunately she took but one step along that wrong road. She perceived in time that one ought not to leave one's path, but that the things passionately loved in youth should be continued in the maturity of talent, not, however, chastened and made cold, but spurred on and driven onwards with even greater fire and fury, following those men of genius who, as they grow old, become grimmer and prouder, more ardent and fiercer, exaggerating their own characteristics constantly, as did Rembrandt, Michael Angelo, and Beethoven.

FRÉDÉRICK LEMAÎTRE

FOR very many years I have made it a point not to miss seeing Frédérick Lemaître in every one of the new parts he has created, so that I know every aspect of his talent. It is always a noble and splendid spectacle to see that great actor, the only one in our midst who recalls Garrick, Kemble, and Macready, and especially Kean, make the frail wings of Boulevard theatres tremble under his mighty Shakespearian voice.

What matters the kind of stage if a man be inspired? Has not Frédérick Lemaître drawn in crowds the most aristocratic and elegant society of Paris, into that narrow den called the Folies-Dramatiques, in which Robert Macaire would wake on the morrow of his execution, enlightened and rejuvenated by the guillotine, and having come to the conclusion that Gogo was a less troublesome victim than good Germeuil with his cream-coloured trousers? People would have gone to see him even had he been performing under the canvas tent of some fair show, behind a row of candles

badly in need of being snuffed and between four smoking lamps.

It is strange that an actor of so much genius should not have been at once enrolled in the troupe of the Comédie-Française, though it is true that Balzac was never elected to the French Academy. Corporate bodies are always somewhat afraid of such great geniuses. It is the Comédie-Française, and not Frédérick Lemaître, that has been the sufferer, for the actor has been followed by poets and clever men in the course of his wanderings. At the Porte-Saint-Martin he found "Richard d'Arlington," "Gennaro," "Don Cæsar de Bazan;" "Ruy Blas" at the Renaissance; "Kean" at the Variétés; and "Paillasse" at the Gaieté, to say nothing of scores of dramas to which his own powerful individuality imparted life, and which when he played in them seemed to be masterpieces.

He enjoys, in common with all thorough actors, the gift of being terrible or comic, well-bred or vulgar, fierce or tender, of condescending to farce or ascending to the most sublime poetic heights. Thus he can with equal talent declaim the imprecations of Ruy Blas in the council of ministers, or rattle out a clown's patter upon a village green. As Richard d'Arlington,

he throws his wife out of the window as unconcernedly as he cooks the acrobat's soup and balances his boy on his nose. He says, "Play up, the band," as readily as —

"I hold him writhing under my armèd heel,"

or —

"I think you have just insulted your Queen."

In Robert Macaire, the Mephistopheles of the bagnio, who is much cleverer than his prototype, he carried sarcasm to the thirtieth power, and hit upon incredible inflections of voice and amazingly eloquent gestures, while he was finer than ever in Paillasse, the clown.

The Progress of French Poetry

Since M DCCC XXX

THE PROGRESS OF FRENCH POETRY SINCE M DCCC XXX

I

IT is no easy matter to determine the part played by poetry in French literature during the period which has elapsed since the Revolution of 1848. The great movement of renovation, which began towards the close of the Restoration and which was continued so brilliantly under the reign of Louis-Philippe, has not yet drawn to a close, and it seems likely to impress its own form upon poetry in this century. There has not been time enough yet to forget the old ideal and to discover a new one. The names that are mentioned when it is desired to sum up briefly the poetical worth of the period are always the same, and no new stars have been added to the constellation. If any new sun has made its appearance in

the depths of the heavens, its light has not yet reached all eyes; critics, those astronomers whose telescope is constantly turned toward the literary heavens, and who watch while other men are asleep, alone perceive and note upon their catalogues these more or less distinct scintillations. As for the public, it troubles itself little about them and is satisfied to recognise three or four stars of the first magnitude, unconscious of the fact that the faint gleams it neglects to notice are occasionally mighty worlds long since observed.

In order that my work may be clear, as is desirable, I shall indicate its necessary divisions. I shall first briefly review the general characteristics of poetry in the nineteenth century, and point out the masters whose influence is still felt by the present generation. Next, I shall speak of the poets who, having become known before 1848, have since continued to produce, and thus belong to the past by their earlier works and to the present by their later ones. Finally, but more fully, since it is the very pith of my work, the poets who have appeared since the Revolution of February. I should have preferred to plunge at once *in medias res*, but nothing begins abruptly; yesterday has given birth to to-day; ideas, like Arabic characters, are connected

with those that have come before and those that come after them.

Modern poetry may be said to date from André Chénier, whose verse, published by Latouche, was a true revelation, and caused men to grasp the full barrenness of the descriptive and didactic versification then in vogue. A fresh wind from Greece blew into every mind, and the intoxicating scent of the flowers that would have deceived the very bees of Hymettus was breathed in with delight, for the Muses had so long held in their hands bouquets of artificial flowers dryer and more odourless than plants in a herbarium, and on which no human tear or drop of dew ever trembled. This return to antiquity, ever young, was the cause of a new springtime. The Alexandrine verse learned from the Greek hexameter mobile cæsura, variety in measure, suspension, overflow, — in a word, the whole of the secret harmony and internal rhythm so fortunately rediscovered by the author of "The Young Patient," "The Beggar," and "The Oarystis." The fragments, the small unfinished pieces especially, resembling unfinished *bassi-relievi* in which some of the figures were almost completed and others merely blocked out with the chisel, taught excellent lessons

by the way they exhibited plainly the labour and art of the poet.

When André Chénier appeared all the sham poetry of the time lost its colours, faded and turned to dust. The shadows of forgetfulness quickly fell upon names illustrious but a short time before, and men looked towards the coming dawn. De Vigny was publishing his "Poems, Antique and Modern;" Lamartine his "Meditations;" Victor Hugo the "Odes and Ballads," and soon to the group were added Sainte-Beuve with his "Poems by Joseph Delorme," and Alfred de Musset with his "Tales of Spain and Italy." My reason for leaving out the intermediary poets, such as Soumet, Guiraud, Lebrun, Émile Deschamps, is that I am not now writing the history of Romanticism, and that it is sufficient to indicate summarily the origins and the predecessors of the present school of poetry. After the July days, Auguste Barbier cracked his whip in his "Iambics," and caused a lively sensation with his lyrical satires, the violence of his tone, and the rush of his rhythm. It was difficult, however, in more peaceful days, to keep up this high pitch, which harmonised with the tumultuous effervescence of minds at that time. "Il Pianto," in which the poet describes his

trip to Italy, is comparatively quiet in colour, and the thunder's distant roar is heard only as low mutterings. "Lazarus" takes up the tale of the poor wretches who have to bear the whole burden of civilisation, the plaints of the man and the child caught in the machinery, and the moans of nature disturbed by the work of the pioneers of progress. By way of contrast, Brizeux, in his idyl entitled "Marie," expressed pure youthful love, the homesickness caused by the remembrance of the mother-land, and the return to country life inspired in tender souls by the wearing existence in cities. Antoni Deschamps skilfully imitated the austere swing of the Dantesque style, and in his "Italians" depicted the country of green oaks and red earth with a drawing as firm as Léopold Robert's and a colour as solid as that of Schnetz, while Charles Coran, in "Onyx" and "Gallant Rimer," praised the fashionable Venus and the elegance of high life without leaving the boudoir.

Meanwhile the masters were developing splendidly. The "Meditations" were succeeded by the "Harmonies," the "Orientales" by "Autumn Leaves," "Shadows and Sunbeams," "Voices from Within," the "Tales of Spain and Italy," by "An Arm-Chair

Drama," the "Poems of Joseph Delorme" by "Consolations" and "Thoughts in August," and admiring imitators grouped themselves around each genius. Lamartine was the first to be copied, with more or less success; next, Victor Hugo had a clever, fervent, and numerous school; Alfred de Vigny, who withdrew within his ivory tower, had a few faithful disciples; later, it was Alfred de Musset who took the lead. His nervous sensibility, mingled with foppishness and sarcasm, his graceful carelessness, his easy verse that at times smacked of prose, and at others rose like a bird upon strong wings, his laugh tinged with his tears, his fresh, candid scepticism still full of emotion even when he blasphemed and despaired, were bound to seduce youth, and did so. Alfred de Musset is the poet of young men of twenty; his Muse sang but of spring and the beginning of summer; it knew neither winter nor autumn. "Namouna" gave birth to many imitations; "Frank" had many brethren, and "Belcolor" was presented with cousins and sisters innumerable. The "Nights of May, August, October, and December" were joined by endless other "Nights" that sincerely wished to be also lyrical and elegiacal, but which only served

to show how impossible it was to imitate Musset's genius.

Philosophical poetry found its interpreter in Laprade, whose poem, "Psyche," tells of the development of the human mind attaining to a higher self-consciousness through the different phases and trials of civilisations. Laprade is nearer to Alfred de Vigny's manner than to that of Victor Hugo, although his somewhat abstract idealism has an accent of its own, which came out later with unmistakable decision in the splendid piece of verse addressed to an oak, which is the poet's masterpiece, the one in which resounds his characteristic note. Since then he has repeated and prolonged that note, in weaker strains, it may be, but he has remained among us the hierophant of vegetable nature and of Alpine solitudes, a sort of Druid, or, rather, of priest of Dodona. In order to sing the great trees, he has discovered lines of sonorous breadth, of majestic and grave harmony, the echo of which may be heard in the work of many of the descriptive poets who came after him. His Muse possesses "the slow majesty of stature and port."

He was one of the first to restore the pagan deities to an honoured place in poetry, and to turn his eyes towards Greece, which the new school had abandoned as being

too classical. The poems entitled "Eleusis," "Cape Sunium," and others testify to his archaic and Alexandrine inspiration. He also wrote "Evangelical Poems," in which he poured the water of the Jordan upon Greek art, but his nature is at bottom a sort of spiritualistic pantheism. Reserved and shy of the multitude, his fame did not attain to that noisy reputation which places the poet in communication with the mass of readers, but he nevertheless influenced literary minds, as may easily be noted in more than one famous or well-known work.

Of these various poetic streams, rivers, torrents, and brooks, some have stopped or dried up, others flow on still, growing broader as they draw near the sea. All the poets of the present generation have drunk from these living waters, some out of a golden crater, others out of a clay or a wooden bowl, others out of the hollow of their hand, but invariably some drops of these waves mingle with their own particular wine. This is not to be taken in the sense of reproach, for originality is nothing else than personal feeling added to the common stock prepared by one's immediate predecessors or contemporaries.

I abridge as much as possible these necessary pre-

liminaries. In art as in reality, one is always some man's son, even when the child denies its own father, and I had perforce to trace the genealogy of the talents I shall presently have to study. In the case of many of them, who bloomed out after the great Romanticist movement, I shall be compelled to go back somewhat beyond 1848. They started some ten years earlier, although the best part of their work belongs to the period within which my work must be kept.

After the great outburst of poetry, to which the Renaissance alone is comparable, there was an abundant aftermath. Every youth turned out his volume of verse stamped with the imitation of the master he preferred, and occasionally betraying imitation of more than one. Out of this Milky Way, that spanned the sky with its whiteness formed of innumerable and not very distinct nebulæ, the first one to emerge with a bright and particular scintillation was Théodore de Banville, whose first volume, dated 1841, and called "The Caryatids," made a sensation. Although the Romanticist school had accustomed the public to precocious talent, amazement was felt at the union of such rare merit in so young a man. Théodore de Banville

was scarcely twenty-one, and could lay claim to the title of minor, so proudly inscribed by Lord Byron on the frontispiece of his "Hours of Leisure." It certainly was possible, in a collection of poems so diverse in tone and mode, to note here and there the influence of Victor Hugo, Alfred de Musset, and Ronsard, whose fervent admirer the poet has rightly continued to be, but it is also easy to discern in it the man's own individuality. Théodore de Banville is exclusively a poet; prose does not seem to exist, so far as he is concerned, and he may repeat with Ovid, "Every line I tried to write was in verse." He possessed as a birthright that wondrous tongue which the world hears without understanding it, and in poetry he was the master of that rarest, loftiest, and winged form, lyricism. He is indeed lyrical, invincibly lyrical, at all times and in all subjects, and almost whether he will or no, so to speak. Like Euphorion, the symbolical offspring of Faust and Helen, he flutters above the flower of the mead, borne aloft by breezes that swell his draperies with their changing prismatic colours. Incapable of restraining his flight, he no sooner touches the earth than he forthwith springs skywards and loses himself in the golden dust of a luminous beam.

This tendency is still more marked in the "Stalactites," in which the poet yields fully to his lyrical intoxication. He floats amid splendour and sound, and the blue and rosy lights of apotheosis flame behind his stanzas as a natural background to them; at times also there is a great burst of fire, as at the end of an opera. Banville feels the beauty of words; he loves to have them brilliant, rich, and rare, and he sets them in gold round his thought as it might be a bracelet round a woman's arm. This is one of the charms of his verse; the greatest charm perhaps. Joubert's clever remarks may be applied to him: "The words light up when the poet's finger communicates its phosphorus to them; the words of poets retain a meaning even when detached from other words, and satisfy one in their isolation as do fine sounds; they seem to be luminous speech, gold, pearls, diamonds, and flowers."

The new school had made scant use of mythology. Its members preferred "breeze" to "zephyr;" they called the sea "sea," and not Neptune. When Théodore de Banville, following Goethe's example, introduced the white-limbed Tyndarides into the sombre, feudal manor of the Middle Ages, he brought back into the Romanticist stronghold the company of ancient

deities, to which Laprade had already raised a small temple in white marble in the depths of one of those groves of which he sings so beautifully. He dared to speak of Venus, of Apollo, and the Nymphs; these lovely names attracted him and delighted him as though they had been agate and onyx cameos. At first he saw antiquity much as Rubens did. The chaste pallor and calm outlines of the marble statues were not enough for him as a colourist, so his goddesses exhibited amid the waves or the clouds pearly bodies, veined with azure, flushed with rose, ruddy hair with topaz and amber tones, and rounded forms of an opulence that would have been avoided by Greek art. Roses, lilies, azure, gold, purple, hyacinth abound in Banville's work; he casts over everything he sees a veil woven of sunbeams, and his ideas, like princesses in fairy tales, move through emerald green meadows, wearing dresses the colour of moonshine, sunshine, and the passing hour.

Of late years Banville, who rarely dropped the lyre to take up the pen, published "The Exiles," in which he has a broader manner and appears to have attained his final form of expression, if one may so say of a poet who is still young, very much alive, and capable

of producing many works yet. Mythology plays a great part in this volume, in which Banville shows himself more Greek than in any other, although his gods and goddesses occasionally have a Florentine air that recalls Primaticcio, and seem to be descending from the ceilings or imposts of Fontainebleau, wearing silver-laced azure cothurns. This proud and gallant Renaissance port appropriately imparts animation to the somewhat cold correctness of pure antiquity.

"The Amethysts" is the title of a small volume marked by typographical elegance and coquetry, in which the author, inspired by Ronsard, has attempted to revive rhythms abandoned since the crossing of masculine and feminine rimes became obligatory. From this mingling of rimes, now prohibited, he has drawn exquisitely harmonious effects. The stanzas in feminine rimes have a softness, a suavity, a gentle melancholy which may partly be realised by listening to the singing of Félicien David's lovely cantilene: "O fair night, linger still." The crossed masculine rimes have astonishing fulness and sonority. It is impossible to speak too highly of the exquisite skill with which the author handles rhythms which Ronsard, Remy Belleau, Antoine Baïf, Du Bellay, Jean Daurat, and

the poets of the Pleiades made so much of. Like the lesser odes of the Vendômois poet, these small pieces have for subjects love, gallantry, or anacreontic philosophy.

I have so far shown but one side of Banville's talent, the serious side. But his Muse wears two masks, the one grave, the other laughing, for this lyric poet of ours is also a jester at times. The "Odes funambulesques" (Odes of the Tight-rope) dance upon the tight-rope with a balance-pole or without, showing the narrow sole of their shoes rubbed with chalk, and performing above the crowd amazing feats with a flashing of spangles and embroidery, and sometimes they take such extraordinary leaps that they lose themselves in the stars.

The sentences twist like contortionists; the rimes jangle like Chinese bells, and the clown describes the crude daubs of signs with mock gravity as he points to each with his long wand. It is something like a mountebank's clap-trap, like a studio joke, like parody and caricature. Taking the pattern of a famous ode, the poet laughingly cuts out the costume of a dwarf as deformed as those painted by Velasquez and Paolo Veronese, and he makes the parrots sing the

nightingale's song. Never did fancy squander riches more recklessly. In this queer volume Banville's inspiration resembles that dainty Chinese princess of whom Heinrich Heine speaks, whose greatest delight was to tear the costliest silks with her nails, polished and transparent as jade stones, and who laughed to tears as she watched the rose, blue, and yellow rags fly over the trellis like butterflies.

The author did not put his name to that clever poetic debauch, though it is probably his most original work. I am of opinion that such buffoon caprices are to be reckoned poetry just as arabesques are admissible in painting. Are there not to be seen in the *Loggie* of the Vatican, placed round the most serious subjects, graceful borders formed of flowers and monsters, in which satyrs' faces put out their tongues, and little Cupids whip up with a stalk of straw the snails harnessed to their cars that have been made by Queen Mab's coach-builder?

In the category of poets who link the two periods must be put the Marquis de Belloy and Count de Gramont, the poetic Pythias and Damon, whose names are no more to be separated than those of the Goncourt brothers. But their brotherhood in heart,

opinions, and feeling does not go the length of confraternity in work ; each of them has his own lyre and sings by himself. Although both are equally royal and share the same beliefs, the talent of each has its own distinctive stamp and its own accent. In the poetry of the Marquis de Belloy there is a purely French characteristic which has vanished since the eighteenth century : wit. Count de Gramont is always serious, though never grumpy, but he either does not know how to smile or will not do so. His muse is grave, pale as marble under her laurel wreath, like a Muse in Raphael's Parnassus, while that of the Marquis de Belloy puts on a faint touch of rouge and a patch to go to the ball. Both seek beauty, but the one admits the merely pretty which the other rejects. Both strive equally after exquisite beauty of form, both are equally careful of their choice of words and of their style, both are equally patient in seeking after perfection.

Under the transparent pseudonym of "Chevalier d'Aï," de Belloy has written the intellectual history of his talent ; he has depicted the literary fluctuations of the amiable knight, who is quite open to modern ideas, in spite of his caste prejudices, and who passes from the tone of Voltaire's lighter verse to the lyricism and

rich colouring of the Romanticist school. The refined, elegant, and rather aristocratic individuality of the poet is, however, always evident in his madrigals and odes. The book, in which the pieces of verse are separated and linked by passages in prose, is in every respect delightful.

Another volume, "Legends in Bloom," contains a number of poems, some of which are quite long. I shall mention as among the more remarkable, "Lilith," whom Eastern tradition affirms to have been Adam's first wife; a tale from the Talmud, told by an old rabbi only half converted to Christianity, and mingled with digressions and touches of humour, for there is a slight vein of satire in de Belloy; no more than a rose's thorn, it may be, but it scratches all the same and brings a little red drop of blood to the surface of the skin. "Faith Saves," is a charming legend, and in "The Byzantines," a dialogue between two pagan shepherds who perceive the dawn of a new faith, the author's elevation of thought, combined with the poetical character of the details and the beauty of the form, recalls Sainte-Beuve's "Neapolitan Eclogue." There is a splendid thought in "The Waters of Lethe": the author refuses to drink the water that

would make him forget the sorrows that have made a man of him, and the remorse which has purified him. He courageously refuses this consolation. Next to the Book of Ruth, translated with biblical earnestness and faith, de Belloy has introduced the legend of Orpha, the second daughter-in-law of Naomi, and has invented her life, availing himself of the silence of the text on this point. The style is so pure that this sweet and tender tale might be put in between the leaves of a family Bible.

The limits of my study do not permit of my speaking at length of Marquis de Belloy, but my sketch of him would not be complete did I not mention at least "Damon and Pythias," — a charming work after the models of antiquity, — "Mall' aria," and "Tasso at Sorrento." A thorough Frenchman, de Belloy is also a thorough Italian; he has Petrarca, Tasso, and Metastasio at his fingers' ends, like his friend de Gramont, who writes sonnets in the tongue of the lovely land where sounds the *si*.

De Gramont's "Songs of the Past" contain many rarely perfect sonnets. This form, so artistically constructed, of such accurately balanced rhythm and so pure that it allows of no flaw, suits his virile, austere,

sombre talent, so lofty and noble in its resignation, and which, though vanquished by destiny, preserves even in sorrow the vigorous attitude of Michael Angelo's "Captives." His opinions did not allow him to take part in the modern movement, and so he goes on his solitary way, proudly silent, through the ruins of the past. His genius seems to be incarnated in that magnificent poem in which one member of the tribe only, a stubborn youth, remains upon the land of his ancestors, while his fellows emigrate. "Endymion" is like a spotless marble statue of antiquity lighted up by a moonbeam. Dian's silvery kiss may descend upon the handsome youth, whom the shepherds of Latmos worship as a god; he is worthy of her, for he has the whiteness of virginity and the chastity of snow.

Along with the sonnets are longer pieces, which the author has called "Rhythms," and which exhibit not only elevation of thought and beauty of style, but also the most thorough knowledge of metre. It is evident that de Gramont has studied lovingly Dante, Petrarca and all the great Italian writers, who are masters in the art of writing verse. He is the only French poet who has managed to attain success with the sestet, a performance that seems impossible of achievement in our

language. In the sestet the rimes of the first stanza, constantly repeated, change places in the following stanzas, like dancing girls that lead the evolutions of their companions one after another.

Nor is Arsène Houssaye a new-comer in the field of poetry. He sang before the days of February, but he has sung since and his latest verse is his best. While busied with novels, criticisms, and literary history, Arsène Houssaye has published three volumes of verse, "Hidden Paths," "Wood Poems," and "Antique Poems," which came in 1850 and connect him with the period which I have to study, to say nothing of the verses that he scatters around as he goes on his way through life, and which he has not collected, — like the Hungarian magnates who do not condescend to bend in order to pick up, at a ball, the pearls that have fallen from their boots. Although his sympathy is with the great Romanticist movement, from which all the poetry of our age has sprung, Arsène Houssaye has not enrolled himself under the banner of any master. He follows neither Lamartine, Victor Hugo, nor Alfred de Musset, for his capricious independence refuses to bow to any yoke. He has not done like some poets who have made for them-

selves a model to which they feel bound to remain faithful under pain of contradicting themselves and being illogical. Many there are nowadays who merely imitate themselves, and dare not emerge from the unchangeable mould within which they have immured their thought.

Houssaye leaves it to others to co-ordinate or account for the contrasts which abound in his work. To-day, for instance, he will make a pastel portrait of Ninon or Cidalise; to-morrow it will be one of Violante, Titian's mistress. If the fancy strikes him, he will not hesitate to model in Parian or Dresden china a shepherd couple wreathed with flowers. But, once he has placed his group on the shelves, he forgets all about it, and he sets about carving in marble a Huntress Diana or some other mythological figure that stands out white against a background of cool verdure. He leaves the drawing-room glittering with lights to plunge into the green, shadowy woods, and if he meet the Muse at the corner of some shady walk, he forgets to return to town, where he has an appointment with some operatic beauty. His verse is as changeful and diverse as Montaigne represents man to be. It expresses what he feels at that particular moment, and

that is the way to be always true. Feelings are not all alike; the important thing is to feel. Under his apparent carelessness his heart beats and his soul yearns; the expression may be simple, but the accent is deep. Talents have an ideal age of their own, which often does not accord with the poet's actual age; a writer of twenty may produce works that indicate forty years of life; others, on the contrary, are eternally young; so André Chénier, Mürger, and Alfred de Musset. It is to this class that Arsène Houssaye belongs, and his hair, as golden as that of the Muse, obstinately refuses to turn gray. Old age keeps away from him.

In these days when the arts so often invade each other's domain and lend comparisons to each other, when a critic writes about pictures and books at one and the same time, it often happens that a poet recalls a painter by certain resemblances that are felt rather than evident. The flower-starred satiny shimmering of the greenery in Arsène Houssaye's poems, through the openings of which are seen in sunlit glades women seated and brilliant in silks and gems, recalls Diaz, that marvellous colourist who has also, at times, shown us Prud'hon's Venus wandering about in the

moonlight of "The Thousand and one Nights," though it should be added that Arsène Houssaye draws more accurately than Diaz de la Peña.

By way of a finishing touch to this rapid sketch, I cannot do better than quote Sainte-Beuve's remark. In his "Portraits" of new poets, he says of Arsène Houssaye, "He is the poet of roses and of youth." But the dewdrop in the roses is often a tear.

It is useless to seek a transition between Arsène Houssaye and Amédée Pommier; the only thing they have in common is their unchanging love of art. Pommier is no new-comer; his first volume of verse bears the date of 1832, and his latest that of 1867. He is obstinately fecund, and his eight or ten volumes have not tired him out. He is a versifier of the first order, and no one can fashion and turn more accurately upon the anvil of poetry an Alexandrine or an octo-syllabic verse. If, which rarely happens, so sure is his hammering, he has to put the iron back into the forge fire, he stirs up the coals, presses the bellows, and the desired form is speedily given to the unwilling metal. The poet enjoys the fight, and he moves about like Vulcan in his cave, enjoying the showers of glowing sparks that fly to right and left, and the sonorous

rhythm echoing under the vaulting. He bears at times the marks of his hard work in the shape of specks and coal upon his brow, but the well-fashioned verse shines like steel and not a flaw is to be found in it. Amédée Pommier equals, if he does not surpass, Barthélemy and Méry in metrical skill, and at need he could have written "Nemesis" single-handed. His chief works are "The Book of Blood," "Oceanids and Fancies," "Sonnets upon the Salon of 1851," "Wrath," and "Trifles," in which he has indulged in all sorts of metrical feats with incomparable ease, agility, and suppleness. Such performances, which are to poetry what fugue and counterpoint are to music, may be looked down upon, but it takes a master to excel in them, and the man who has not acquired skill in them may find himself some day with a thought for which he cannot find a form.

Of all Pommier's books, "Hell" created the greatest sensation, and it is really a most original work. Thinking that hell was being over spiritualised, he made it more manifest, as Mme. de Sévigné said of religion, by the addition of a few fine old physical tortures, such as caldrons of boiling oil, streams of molten lead, ladlefuls of hot pitch, red-hot beds, prods with pitchforks,

and whips with scorpions, introducing the devilments of Callot into Dante's circles. The metre he uses is a strophe of twelve lines composed of a quatrain and of two feminine rimes thrice repeated and set between two masculine rimes. Pommier handles that stanza with uncommon success, and used it again in his "Paris," a sort of lyrical and grotesque description of the mighty city, in the course of which Victor Hugo rubs elbows with Saint-Amant and Scarron, — a curious mingling of splendour and wretchedness, of noble and buffoon characters, of brilliant pictures and garish posters, of superb verse and prosy lines, of rags and gems, of ingredients queerer even than those Macbeth's witches threw into their caldron. Sometimes the poet, like Lord Byron, who, in "Beppo," indulged in the fancy of riming the advertisements and the label of Harvey's Sauce, amuses himself with writing advertisements for the newspapers. The fault of this very long poem is the sort of snoring sound due to the redundancy of the thrice repeated rimes that recur in every stanza.

Amédée Pommier tried many a different style: odes, satires, epistles, poems, sonnets, fanciful riming; and in every case he has given proof of possessing a vigorous and robust talent backed by serious study. Chape-

lain might say of him as he did of Molière, "The fellow knows Latin." His best piece of work is probably the one he has called "Utopia," in which he describes his ideal of perfection. It is a poem of modest length, a gem in precious metal daintily wrought, a pearl set in gold, a flower that deserves to find a place among the loveliest in an anthology. He realised his dream as he described it.

Though it is but recently that Calemard de la Fayette's "Poem of the Fields" appeared, the writer has long worked in the field of poetry, an ungrateful and often sterile soil, that one abandons, however, only with regret. He had before this written poems and a metrical translation of Dante in very remarkable verse, and now, after a long period of silence, he reappears with a poem in eight cantos.

Long poems are rather rare in the new school, especially didactic poems. Although the style appears to be old-fashioned, it is really antique only. Hesiod wrote the "Months and Days," and Vergil the "Georgics," which are surely the equivalent of Saint-Lambert's "Seasons" and Delille's "Gardens." I am of opinion that Romanticism, which possesses so rich a palette and so broad a feeling for nature, and which is

not afraid of plain speaking and familiar details, might very well succeed in descriptive and didactic poetry. Calemard de la Fayette thought so too. Withdrawn from the bustle of Paris and having become the owner of a large country estate, he undertook to work his own land, though he did not on that account give up his artistic tastes. He tried to harness Pegasus to the plough, and the good winged steed did not forthwith rear and kick fiercely, as it does in the ballad in which Schiller represents it as compelled by a peasant to perform menial labour. Having recognised the fact that it was being driven by a poet, it did not fly up heavenwards with the smashed agricultural implement, and traced instead a straight furrow, for it was good soil on which it ploughed upon the gentle slopes that lead from Parnassus to the lowlands below. In order to write "Georgics," one must be more than a Vergil; one must also be Mathieu de Dombasle, and this combination is rarely found in one and the same man. But it existed in Calemard de la Fayette, who is not an amateur agriculturist. He knows the country because he has worked in it; he owns real meadows, real vineyards, real farms, real cattle, and, wonderful to relate of a poet, he knows the difference between wheat and

barley, and between clover and sainfoin. Living the healthy life of a gentleman farmer, he has acquired a genuine taste for nature and agriculture, and thinking as he worked, he wrote as he went, almost unconsciously, as he strolled by his wheat fields or his hawthorn hedges in bloom, the "Poem of the Fields" which has this advantage over all other works of the kind, that it is scented with the odour of new-mown hay instead of smelling of midnight oil. His descriptions have been drawn *ad vivum*, as the ancients used to say, not with the aid of a rapid sketch, but from studies conscientiously worked out in front of a model that did not spare the sittings. The accuracy of the drawing and the correctness of the colouring show that the painter has long been on intimate terms with his subject and that his enthusiasm for country life is in no way fictitious.

Of course the story told by such a poet cannot be very involved, and Calemard de la Fayette had the good sense not to introduce into it a romantic plot or superfluous episodes. Sowing, harvesting, the gathering of the vintage, the varied pictures of the seasons, the description of the farm-house, of the stables, of the horses taken to water, of the oxen returning from work, of the peasants, who are shown as neither worse nor better

than they are, but in their strong simplicity and their natural majesty, the expression of the feelings which such sights inspire, and here and there, in due proportion, flowers of poesy mingled with agricultural precepts, as poppies and cornflowers mingle with the wheat, — such are the elements the poet has used in the composition of his pictures and the filling of his canvas.

Nor is it to be supposed that city poets can teach anything to this singer of the fields; he has forgotten none of the tricks of the craft. His verse is full, solid, and grave; his rimes are rich, always supported by the sustaining consonant, and sound as clear as the bells on the necks of the cows that come down from the hills; they are always brought in suitably and are novel without being eccentric. Vergil, while he might point out some heaviness, would applaud these new "Georgics."

Henri Blaze de Bury, though he made his first appearance when the Romanticist movement was in full swing, towards the year 1833, is still a young man and has not abandoned the field of battle of poetry, as have done several of the best men, who have turned away from the sacred art for the sake of criticism, which is more lucrative and for which a market is more easily found. His first work was "The Supper at the Com-

mander's," published first in the "Revue des Deux Mondes," and republished frequently since then. It was an extravagant and eccentric performance, in which prose and verse were mingled in Shakespearian proportions, and which made it plain that Tirso de Molina's and Molière's Don Juan had read Byron and Hoffmann, and listened to Mozart's music. The poet in Henri Blaze de Bury is composed of three very distinct elements: the man of the world, or to make it plainer, the dandy, the dilettante, and the critic. When still quite young he knew German and music, wore straw-coloured gloves, and through his father obtained access to the wings and private boxes of the operatic and lyrical stages. If to this be added a touch of the diplomatist, connections with some of the Northern Courts, the result is an elegant and worldly poet, though a very learned and very well-read and thoroughly Romanticist one, with a distinct character of his own.

Henri Blaze translated Goethe's "Faust," and not the first part only, but the second, which is infinitely more difficult, to the entire satisfaction of the Germans, who were amazed at finding a Frenchman capable of understanding the most abstract and resolutely enigmatical work of their greatest genius. His verse, most skil-

fully constructed, though at times apparently careless, recalls here and there the swing of Musset's. Like the dandies of the day, Blaze's verse wears a rose in its button-hole, and its hat cocked slightly upon its curly hair. The resemblance, however, goes no farther; Alfred de Musset is English, and Blaze German; the one swears by Byron, the other by Goethe, though both remain purely original. The German forget-me-nots, roses, nightingales, sentimental reveries, and moonbeams in no wise prevent Blaze de Bury being a very dry, sarcastic, and clear Frenchman who can put a little blue flower picked on the banks of the Rhine in a glass filled with the limpid Voltaire. His knowledge of music and of the great composers furnishes him with a series of comparisons and effects of which poets, usually pretty weak dilettanti, are deprived. I cannot analyse in detail his poetic work, which is voluminous, and I have to be satisfied with sketching the characteristics of this writer. To "The Supper at the Commander's" must be added "The Milky Way," "What the Daisies are saying," and "Wild Roses." The "Intermedes and Poems," published in 1853, contain "Perdita," "Little Red Riding Hood," "Vulturio," "Bella," "Frantz Coppola," and "Jenny Plantin," the latter perhaps the

best in the volume. It is the touching story of a maiden who has fallen in love with a sham poet, such as abound in our time, who marries him, makes him wealthy, and kills herself in order that a great and ennobling grief may enter into his commonplace and prosaic life. But the sacrifice is in vain; the Boulevard Manfred takes to writing vaudevilles and forgets the dead girl. The novel effects in irony and enthusiasm are rendered more striking by being placed in a modern setting.

In "The Hell of the Mind," which was his first volume, and in "Half Tints," another collection of verse that appeared soon afterwards, Auguste Vacquerie, who was pointed to by superficial critics as an enthusiastic disciple of Victor Hugo, exhibited, on the contrary, an almost fierce originality that causes him to stand almost alone in the Romanticist camp. A man may love and admire a master and devote himself to him almost to the length of fanaticism without necessarily becoming a mere copyist of his ways. And nothing can be less unlike the exuberant lyricism, the inexhaustible flow of language of Victor Hugo than the sharp, short manner of Vacquerie, who always goes straight to the end. In him will always prevails over inspiration and caprice;

the poem must express first the idea intrusted to it, and is scarcely allowed by the writer to gad about after flowers and butterflies unless this form part of his plan and serves as a contrast or a dissonance. He never adds anything when he goes over a piece, but cuts out; he does not graft on, he prunes, for he means nothing shall remain but what is essential. Auguste Vacquerie might say with Joubert: "If there be a man tormented by the accursed ambition to put a whole book within a page, a whole page within a sentence, a whole sentence in a word, I am he." This manly sobriety, severe towards itself, and which rejects every useless ornament, characterises the whole of the work of the poet who wrote "The Hell of the Mind" and "Half Tints." There is a mathematician in him who is constantly asking, "What is the good?" A lofty, upright, somewhat narrow thinker, he knows nothing of compromise, and if by chance he happen to be mistaken, he is so with imperturbable conscientiousness, with astounding coolness and stupefying rigour of deduction. Thanks to the clear-cut and logical form, error assumes the appearance of truth. Coldly resolute and absolutely tranquil, the poet carries a thing to its utmost logical conclusion once he has accepted the

particular point of view. Of course I refer to purely literary matters only. In spite of certain eccentricities, to which too much importance has been attached, Vacquerie loves the beautiful, the true, and the good with a love that has never changed. Since 1845, when his last volume of verse appeared, he seems to have abandoned poetry for the drama and criticism.

And now I am in great trouble. I ought to name among the writers who produced verse before 1848 and who are still doing so, an author who is dear to me, but whom it is difficult for me to praise and whom I cannot possibly speak ill of. Poets being in the habit of saying to prose writers who criticise them, *Ne sutor ultra crepidam*, the difficult task of speaking of his brethren has been intrusted to a poet. But that poet, who is myself, and who owes to his journalistic work such notoriety as attaches to his name, has naturally turned out works in verse. Three volumes bear his name, "Albertus," "The Comedy of Death," and "Enamels and Cameos." The two former must be included within the Carlovingian cycle of Romanticism; they belong to the period between 1830 and 1838. Made into one volume and filled out with poems of more recent date, they represent the author's

poetical career up to 1845, and I have therefore no need to take them into account. But "Enamels and Cameos," published in 1853, fulfil the conditions needed in order to be mentioned in this work, and for me to omit them would be more unpleasantly affected than my indulging in the satisfaction of talking about them. And I shall talk of them only with all the reserve called for by my position as poet and critic.

The title, "Enamels and Cameos," indicates my intention to treat slight subjects within a restricted space, sometimes with the brilliant colours of enamel upon a plate of gold or copper, sometimes by using the cutter's wheel upon gems such as agate, cornelian, or onyx. Every poem was to be a medallion fit to be set in the cover of a casket, or a seal to be worn on the finger — something recalling the copies of antique medals one sees in the studios of painters or sculptors. But I did not intend to deny myself the pleasure of carving on the whitish or reddish layers of the gems a clean modern profile, or of dressing the hair of Parisian Greek women seen at a recent ball after the fashions of Syracusan medals. The Alexandrine verse being too mighty for such modest ambition, I re-used the octosyllabic verse only, which I made over, polished

and chiselled with all possible care. This form, by no means a new one, but renewed by the rhythm, the richness of the rimes and the accuracy to which any workman may attain when he patiently and leisurely works out some small task, was rather well received and octosyllabic verse in quatrains became for a time a favourite subject for practice by young poets.

II

THE February Revolution was not a literary revolution, and gave birth to many more pamphlets than odes. It was impossible to think, on account of the din in the streets; the minds of men were excited and inflamed by politics, systems, and utopias. Poets, therefore, kept silence, knowing that their songs would strike deaf ears. Yet out of all the hurly-burly there did emerge one original figure, that of Pierre Dupont. He very nearly fulfilled the ideal of a popular poet, and was the Auguste Barbier of that particular revolution, although there is not the least connection between his "Songs" and the "Iambics." Shortly before this time he had been casting about to find his true career, and had tried a number of roads, every one of which led him farther away from it. Finally, throwing aside imitation and conventional forms, he dared to be himself, and invented a new "chanson" which owes nothing to Béranger and at first seemed to have naught to do with art, though the

finest and most refined art is concealed within it, under a cloak of rusticity. These songs have not at all the air of having been written in a study; they recall the "cantilenes" chanted by the peasants as they plough, by the herds watching over their flocks, by the girls who sit spinning on the threshold of the cottages, by the workmen journeying through France, by mothers lulling their babes to sleep.

Such songs, in which the soul of the people lisps its secret feelings in artless, incomplete speech, charming as that of childhood, write themselves of their own accord to old themes that are ever new and yet old as the hills. The air is born with the words from the sigh of a pipe, the plaint of the wind, the song of the nightingale, or the trill of the lark. The bullfinch in the near hedge-row whistles the rime that is lacking, and if the rime does not turn up it is replaced by some sort of an assonance, or else the poet does without. Every professional poet must, at some time or other, have envied these couplets with their natural and touching grace, and must have confessed that he would willingly exchange his finest bouquets, made up of gorgeous hot-house flowers, for a single handful of these field grasses mingled

with wild flowerets that give out the very scent of the country.

It was Pierre Dupont's good fortune to convey a fresh and healthy impression of this sort to a public filled with burning passions. He made nature shine out in the very midst of the tumult, and led thoughts back to peaceful scenes. His song, "The Oxen," was an immense success, and was worthy of it, which is not commonly the case, for the people often take a great fancy to some idiotic refrain. Everybody in France, at that time, sang, more or less in tune, of "the great white oxen spotted red." It was at one and the same time the song of a poet and of a peasant, in which strong feeling was expressed in artless and charming images drawn from rural life, and in a highly wrought style, the art of which was artistically concealed.

"The Bagpipe" is, in its way, a little masterpiece, a sort of Theocritan idyl written in couplets and in the most humble and familiar mode. As the poet goes on giving advice as to the kind of skin and wood that should be chosen, the proper place to bore the holes in the pipes, and the way to make the instrument, distended by the breath of a man, tell of grief, joy,

and love, it is almost as if one heard a faun teaching a shepherd in an eclogue how to join with wax the reeds that form a Pan's pipe. Yet there is neither imitation nor reminiscence of the classical writers; the song is just the kind of song that a herd might chant while watching his goats from the top of a rock. Not a single literary expression jars upon the ear, and nevertheless artistic feeling is satisfied. "The Louis d'or," "The Speedwell," "The Evening Meal," as well as other poems in which country life is depicted with a truthfulness of colouring that excludes neither grace nor poetry, are the fruit of a delightful inspiration. There is something of Burns in Pierre Dupont. Accustomed to gaze upon nature, his thoughts run of themselves into the channel of reverie and contemplation. The author of "The Oxen," however, is no mere bucolic poet who, in his Vale of Tempe, remained a stranger to the tumult of life in towns or only hears the distant echo of it, like the shepherds in Vergil who, as they sit beneath the shade, wonder what that Rome can be of which they hear so much. Pierre Dupont lived within the furnace itself, on the very brink of the volcano, and every political event inspired him with a song that he set

to music, and which, like an ædes of antiquity, he sang himself in meetings, clubs, and studios. He had a clear, sonorous voice that soon was worn by fatigue, for he was constantly asked to repeat his stanzas, the refrain of which was often taken up, at the very second one, by the enthusiastic hearers. Thus for some months was presented the spectacle, undoubtedly a rare and novel one in our highly developed civilisation, of a poet performing his functions directly and placing himself in direct communication with the public, instead of intrusting his inspiration to a printed book. All he lacked was the primitive lyre formed of a turtle-shell and ox-horns.

Pierre Dupont's political songs are more utopian than satirical, more tender than full of hate. He dreams of fraternity, universal peace and happiness for all men. According to him, the sword shall break the sword, and love shall prove stronger than war. The act of fighting is a sort of embrace, and nations that have fought with each other are very near to loving one another. Amid all those lofty fancies the longing for the life of the fields constantly reappears; the deep yearning for nature makes itself felt in the heart of a stanza intended to be socialistic. "The

Song of the Workmen," which in more than one respect recalls the famous "Hooligans" of Béranger, and expresses with joyous and sad carelessness the solidarity of true hearts in misery, has a touch that is peculiar to Pierre Dupont and that is found in no other poet. The sudden cry, —

"We should love to be in the bright sunshine And under the great oaks' leafy boughs!"

carries the soul away from the sombre surroundings in which it is plunged. A burst of pure air and a bright beam of light make their way into the gruesome dens that are fitter for the habitation of owls than of men. This upward flight is wanting in Béranger's song, which otherwise is marked by clean work and much spirit.

At that time, and without indulging in any foolish illusion of pride, Pierre Dupont had reason to consider himself a popular and national poet. He believed he had linked his name forever to great deeds, or at least to what appeared in that day to be great deeds. In art, however, events pass away and beauty alone survives. The Muse is jealous; she is as proud as a goddess, and recognises her own autonomy alone; she

dislikes serving an idea, for she is a queen, and in her realm all must obey her. She accepts no watchword, whether that of a doctrine or of a party, and if the poet, her master, compels her to march at the head of a company, singing a hymn or blowing on a trumpet, she takes her revenge for it sooner or later. She ceases whispering to him the winged words that rustle in the light like the wings of golden bees; she takes from him sacred harmony and mysterious rhythm, introduces discord into his rimes, and allows heavy lines borrowed from the newspaper or the pamphlet to creep into his work. It is not that she rebels against the inspiration of contemporary events; she may be moved by them and utter in an ode a sublime cry, but she insists on being free to go when she pleases to listen to the eternal voices of nature in the woods, or to spell over her memories. To partisans she will always return Lenau's proud answer: —

"Poetry went into the deep woods, seeking the sacred paths of solitude. Suddenly there alighted around her a noisy swarm that called to the dreamer: 'What do you here? Let the flowers shine and the trees whisper, and cease scattering abroad useless plaints,

for here comes a virile school fit to bear arms! The woods will never inspire you with energetic songs. Come with us, let your powers serve our cause; newspaper praise shall generously reward each step you shall take on our behalf. Rise to efforts that aim at making the world happy; let not your heart grow rusty in solitude; come out of your dreams; become sociable; wed action, or else you will become wrinkled like an old maid!'

"And Poetry replied: 'Leave me; I do not trust your urging. You pretend to free life, and you will not grant liberty to art! Flowers never lie, and more surely than your terrified faces their fresh bloom tells me that humanity's deep wound is about to be healed. The prophetic whisperings of the woods foretell to me that freedom is coming to the world; their murmur tells it me more plainly than your papers with all their discredited bragging, with their noisy words in which there is no soul. I shall, if I please, gather flowers here; I shall, if I please, sing Liberty, but never will I consent to enrol myself with you.' And so saying she turned her back upon the vulgar throng."

Pierre Dupont did not, like Lenau, despise passing popularity, and he bade his Muse sing the refrain called

for, but he gained little by it. Gradually the tumult died away; the refrains that followed men from the street into the theatres, like a haunting motive that one cannot get rid of and that incessantly sounds in one's ear, ceased to flit upon the lips of men. Silence encompassed the poet; darkness fell upon his brow, upon which popularity seemed to have placed a wreath of immortal bays; minds turned to other thoughts, but Pierre Dupont will retain the fame of having believed in poetry at a time when all men turned towards politics.

A new poet was about to appear, and if in Pierre Dupont's work one feels the throbbing of the time in which he sang, it is impossible to assign a date to Leconte de Lisle's "Poems of Antiquity," which at once stirred the minds of those in France who are still moved by serious art. Nothing can be more haughtily impersonal, more apart from the times, more disdainful of vulgar interests and commonplaceness than these poems. The author appears to have avoided with austere reserve and proud resolution whatever might attract and charm the public. He has made no concessions to coquetry, to the taste of the day. Deeply impregnated with the spirit of antiquity, Leconte de

Lisle considers the various existing civilisations to be varying forms of decadence, and, like the Greeks, would willingly term barbarians the people who do not speak the sacred tongue. Olympic Goethe himself did not exhibit, towards the end of his life, more icy and serene coldness than this young poet at the start of his career, yet Leconte de Lisle comes from the tropics; he was born in a burning climate where blazes the sun, where flowers intoxicate, counselling vague reverie, idlesse, and voluptuousness. Nothing, however, could soften that strong and self-possessed nature of his, in which enthusiasm is purely intellectual, and which sees the world only when transposed into pure forms in the eternal sphere of art.

It was strange indeed to see this youth proclaiming impassibility almost as if it were a dogma, and affirming it to be one of the chief merits of an artist, immediately after an epoch when passion had been deified, as it were, when lyricism was wildly flying at its highest amid the clouds and the thunderstorms, when venturesome poets cast the bridle on the neck of Pegasus and spurred him on.

The volume opens with a poem addressed to fair Hypatia, that sainted pagan who suffered martyrdom

for the sake of the gods of antiquity. She is Leconte de Lisle's muse, and admirably incarnates his particular form of inspiration. It was right that he should invoke her at the outset of his poems, and his first song was indeed due to her. Like her, he regrets the splendid gods, the most perfect symbols of beauty, the most magnificent personifications of natural forces, which, though driven from Olympus, their temples and their worshippers lost, still reign over the world by the beauty of form. The modern poet, who ought to have been born in Athens in the days of Phidias, mingles Platonic and Alexandrian interpretations with ancient mythology. Under pagan fables he recognises primitive notions already forgotten, and, like Emperor Julian, he takes paganism back to its origins. He is more Greek than the Greeks at times, and his pagan orthodoxy might lead one to believe that, like Æschylus, he also has been initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries. He presents the strange phenomenon, for our times, of a soul from which every modern thought has been absolutely banished.

In his fervent love for Hellenism, Leconte de Lisle has rejected the Latin terminology of Greek names, for no very apparent reason. This robs these names, so

beautiful in themselves, of a part of their sonorousness and colour. With him Jupiter becomes Zeus again, Hercules Herakles, Neptune Poseidon, Diana Artemis, Juno Hera, and so on. Chiron the Centaur has resumed the K and is Khiron, which gives him a more grim aspect, while the names of places appear in the poet's verse in their real orthography and with their traditional epithets. No doubt these are merely outward details, yet they are important; their harmony and novelty add to the beauty due to the metre; their unwonted desinence introduces in many places unexpected rimes, and such a surprise is a delight in poetry that, like ours, lacks short and long syllables; the ear that expects a certain sound is pleased at being startled by the resonance of an antique one. Leconte de Lisle carries out his system a little too far, perhaps, when he calls the Fates *Moiræ*, Destiny *Keres*, and the heavens *ouranos*; he might just as well write in Greek. But one soon gets used to these revivals of ancient names that, at first, attract the eye, and one enjoys without effort or fatigue that austere, noble, pure poetry which impresses one like a Doric temple standing out white against a background of purple mountains or a bit of blue sky. Sometimes, not far from the fane, statues

of heroes, goddesses, or nymphs, backed by clumps of myrtle or rose laurel, exhibit their chastely nude beauty in sparkling Parian marble. That is the only ornament the artist allows himself.

The Greek in André Chénier, though it breathes the purest feeling for antiquity, is yet mingled with Latin, like a passage in Homer imitated by Vergil, or an ode of Pindar translated by Horace. Leconte de Lisle's Hellenism is truer, more frank, and more archaic; it springs from the fountain head itself and is free from all trace of modernity. Some of his poems read like translations of unknown or lost Greek originals. They have not the Ionian grace that charms one in "The Sick Youth," but they possess a severe beauty, at times somewhat cold and almost enigmatical, so severe is the poet towards himself. He would not, like Terpander, add three cords to his lyre; the original four are sufficient for him. Leconte de Lisle, indeed, is a trifle too severe perhaps, for it seems to me that Greek genius is somewhat broader, easier, and less resolutely sharp in outline.

In spite of Leconte de Lisle's love for antiquity, there is found in his verse a feeling personal to himself and not to be met with in the poetry of the ancients.

It is the longing to be absorbed into the bosom of nature, to swoon away into eternal rest, to lose himself in a state of infinite contemplation and absolute immobility that borders closely upon the Hindoo *Nirvana*. He proscribes passion, drama, and eloquence as being unworthy of poetry, and he would willingly stay the beating of the heart in the Muse's marble bosom. In his opinion, the poet ought to behold the things of this earth in the same way as a god might behold them from the summit of Olympus, letting them be mirrored, without being interested in them, in his lack-lustre eyes, and impart to them, with absolute indifference to them, the higher life of form. Such a doctrine soon leads to the forsaking of Pindus for Mount Merou, and the Ilyssus for the Ganges. Hindoo poems, therefore, at once follow the Hellenic ones, and in them harmoniously strange names blossom like the lotus and tinkle like the golden bells on Vasantasena's ankles. The Vedic hymn elbows the Orphic hymn; Surya, Bhagavat, Sunacepa, Vichvamitra, Santa unroll the vague Hindoo cosmogonies in magnificent verse, now constellated with images that are like the gems and pearls lavished upon the robes of a Maharajah, now as dense as the jungles where crawls the tiger, where

uprises the cobra capello, where the monkey, the descendant of Hanoumen, grins and chatters as it hangs from the creepers; but always, through some opening, appears the poet's serene thought rising above his work like a white Himalayan peak, the immaculate and eternal snows of which no sun, not even that of India, can melt.

As I have already said, Leconte de Lisle was born in the tropics, and though he has escaped the enervating influence of the climate, he excels in depicting these rich lands with their gorgeous flora, the names of which sound voluptuously in the ear like music, and seem to scatter unknown scents. "The Ravine of Saint-Gilles," "The Manchy," "The Sleeping Condor" render with incomparable brilliancy that dazzling world, in which flowers bloom amid a burning coolness.

It strikes me that the poet's masterpiece is the poem called "Noon," which every one in France who still cares for verse knows by heart. The scene is apparently laid in a landscape of Provence, southern Italy, or northern Africa, for we have no longer here the luxuriant vegetation of tropical forests, but the sober-tinted foliage and the sharp out-

lines of Europe. Noon, the hour of implacable light and of the sun high in the sky pouring down its burning beams upon the hushed earth; the hour when there is no shadow save a thin blue line on the edge of the woods where are dreaming the oxen lying down in the grass, — noon suits the poet, who delights in firmness and clearness and avoids vaporous, hazy contours. Better than any of his predecessors he knows how to reproduce its luminous feeling of utter weariness and its serene sadness. In his verse, the flaming atmosphere seems to quiver to the accompaniment of the cicadas' song, but the poet asks of nature's indifference and gloom no consolation of any kind; he asks of her but eternal rest and divine nothingness.

Greece, India, and tropical nature do not wholly absorb Leconte de Lisle; he makes many an excursion into the realm of Northern mythology; he glances through the runes and Sagas, and in his "Barbaric Poems" he appears like a skald singing of war before the battle begins, for he has a marvellous facility for assimilating the feeling, form, and colour of primitive poetry. Intrenched within his haughty indifference to success, or to popularity rather, Leconte de Lisle has gathered around himself a school of young poets who

rightly admire him, for he possesses all the lofty qualities of the head of a school, and who imitate him to the best of their ability, for doing which they are blamed, wrongly, in my opinion, for he who has never sat at a master's feet can never become a master himself, and no matter what may be said to the contrary, poetry is an art that has to be learned, that has its own formulæ, its own arcanæ, its own counterpoint, and its own harmonic work. Inspiration should have ever ready at hand a keyboard absolutely in tune and to which not a single note is wanting.

Leconte de Lisle may be considered one of the strongest and most individual poets who have arisen of late years. He marks everything he does with an unmistakable stamp of his own. If at bottom his talent is that of the ancients, if, in a measure, he is the descendant of André Chénier, of Alfred de Vigny, and of Lamartine, and if he has turned to account the improvements in metre and rhythm introduced by the new school, he possesses a die bearing his own effigy and with it he marks all his coin, whether it be gold, silver, or bronze.

Although Louis Bouilhet, through the character of his talent and the admiration he feels for its masters,

belongs to the great school of 1850, he belongs by his years and the time of his appearance to the present period. He has allowed the stage to tempt him away from pure poetry, and the brilliant welcome he received may perhaps keep him there for good. All the same he brought out three volumes of verse that would have sufficed to give him a reputation, even had he not tried his hand at plays, which so often make quickly known a name hitherto unknown. The first of these volumes, entitled "Melænis," is a poem sufficiently long to fill the whole book, a point to be noted in these days of elegiacal, lyrical, intimate, and almost always personal inspiration. Poems are rare among books of verse, which are usually composed of detached pieces. Modern poets, in general, rather neglect composition, trusting, as they do, to lucky chances in execution and to the minor beauties that are occasionally the result of carefully sought or of accidental rimes; for just as a motive uprises under the fingers of a composer who lets his fingers stray over the keyboard, so does an idea, an image often spring from the meeting of words brought together for metrical purposes.

"Melænis" is a Roman poem in which at the very outset, the author gives proof of his familiarity with

Latin life; he walks about the Rome of the Cæsars without once hesitating about his way, from the Subura quarter to the Capitoline Hill. He knows the wine-shops where actors, gladiators, muleteers, Salian priests and poets drink, fight, and sleep under smoking lamps, while some female Syrian or Gaditanian slave dances to them. He has entered the laboratory of the pale-faced Canidia, a gloomy manufactory of philters and poisons, and he knows by heart the incantations of the Thessalian witches. You may be sure that if he bid you sit on a purple couch at a banquet given by a rich patrician, neither Lucullus nor Apicius nor Trimalcion could find fault with the menu. Petronius himself, the arbiter of elegance and the purveyor of Nero's pleasures, could not arrange for a more voluptuously perfect orgy, and when Paulus, the hero of the poem, already forgetful of Melænis, the beautiful courtesan who loves him, leaves the triclinium in order to wander within the mysterious garden where Marcia, the young wife of the edile awaits him, the verse, that but now amused itself with reproducing with comic seriousness the strange sumptuousness of the Roman cookery or the grotesque grimaces of Stellio the dwarf, suddenly becomes tender, pas-

sionate, steeped in perfumes, and bathed in silvery moonbeams that rival the red blaze of the banqueting-hall. I have not, however, to summarise "Melænis," and I have no space to do so. Let it suffice to say that Louis Bouilhet has introduced into the framework of a romantic story numerous pictures of life in antiquity, and has shown that his scholarship as an archæologist in no wise impairs his poetry. "Melænis" is written in the stanza of six lines with triple rimes so often used by the author of "Namouna," and I regret the fact, for this purely metrical resemblance has led people to believe that Bouilhet voluntarily or involuntarily imitated Alfred de Musset, though no two poets were ever more unlike. Bouilhet has a robust, rich, picturesque manner, and he is very fond of local colour; he has numerous full, strong, broad lines, brought out at one breath, to quote Sainte-Beuve's expressions in his clever remarks upon the differences between Classicist and Romanticist poetry, which accompany the works of "Joseph Delorme."

"The Fossils," as the title plainly indicates, have for their subject the antediluvian world, with its population of strange vegetation and monstrous animals, shapeless forms, for chaos is seeking to create. In this

work, the most difficult perhaps ever attempted by a poet, Bouilhet has drawn pictures grand in their strangeness, in which imagination rests upon the teaching of science, while avoiding didactic dryness.

As if the natural difficulties presented by the subject were not sufficient in themselves, Bouilhet forbade himself the use of any technical terms, of any words that might recall posterior notions. Pterodactyls, pleiosauri, mammoths, mastodons appear emerging from the warm mud of the scarcely cooled planet the crust of which is burst open by volcanoes; they are not named, merely described, but so powerfully that they are easily recognised by their shape and gait. Terrible indeed are their loves and fights amid the giant vegetation of the first epoch, on the shores of the boiling sea, in an atmosphere laden with carbonic acid and traversed by the thunderbolts of innumerable storms. The colossal, the enormous, the strange, whatever is curiously and splendidly coloured attracts Bouilhet, and it is to the painting of such subjects that his broad, sonorous, and mighty hexameter, genuinely epic in its construction, and recalling at times the full and strong manner of Lucretius, is best fitted. The poem ends with the appearance of the first human pair, and the

author, foreseeing in the future further cosmic revolutions, hails the advent of a new Adam, who is the personification of a higher humanity.

In his "Festoons and Astragals" Louis Bouilhet indulges the wildest caprices of a vagabond fancy. In short pieces he sums up the aspect of a civilisation or a barbarous state. India, Egypt, China, painted with a few characteristic touches, appear in turns in all their quaint brilliancy. Modern subjects do not seem to suit the poet's style so well, although "Festoons and Astragals" contains a few personal pieces that are well turned and of much feeling.

It was almost on the morrow of the February Revolution that — though the paving stones used for the barricades had scarce been replaced on the streets — Joseph Autran's "The Daughter of Æschylus" was performed at the Odéon and met with a success that made men forget the grave political preoccupations of the moment. I shall transcribe here a few lines from my article of March 27, 1848, as they render faithfully the impression the play made on the public in those days of excitement: "At his first attempt Mr. Joseph Autran has won for himself the ivory stool under the white marble portico where are enthroned

the demigods of thought. The Greeks of Marseilles who dwell on a golden shore between the azure of the sky and the azure of the sea, are from their birth familiarised with antiquity; rhythm and harmony come naturally to them; endowed with Athenian sensuality for beauty, they possess a love of form rare in France, where men are thinkers rather than artists. Marseilles is the native place of rich rimes, sonorous epithets, and musical Alexandrines. There, poets still have a lyre, and could readily improvise their verses upon a promontory, facing the sun and the waves, in the centre of a circle of hearers, just as on Cape Sunium or the Mole at Naples."

The Academy's approval confirmed the judgment of the public, and "The Daughter of Æschylus" was thus enabled to replace the wreath of bays upon the brow of her father, unjustly overcome by unworthy rivals in his last tragic combat.

Although I have to speak of poetry properly so called only, and to leave aside the dramatic form, I had to mention this elegant and noble tragedy, carved in purest Pentelican marble, and which the author, modestly styles a study, since it was on the stage that our poet first made his appearance and in such brilliant

fashion. After so unmistakable a triumph — the author, summoned by the enthusiastic calls of the audience, was compelled to come forward to the footlights, nervous and apparently startled by his success — it takes uncommon philosophy and a genuine love of art to return to the peaceful shades, and to rime far from the madding crowd just like an unknown poet. It is true that "The Daughter of Æschylus" was not the poet's first work; he had sent forth, between 1835 and 1840 some *ballons d'essai* that the indifferent public had allowed to vanish unnoticed in the blue vault of heaven or in the clouds. With us, immediate notoriety is not easily attained save through the stage, and in spite of his success at the Odéon, Autran was more a lyrical than a dramatic poet.

Born on the shores of the Mediterranean, he had gazed from earliest childhood upon the sea of an azure lovelier even than that of the sky. He loved the waves that smashed into foam their harmonious curves, following each other regularly like the sonorous rimes of beauteous verse, the sails vanishing on the horizon, like unto swan's-down, the lights of the fisher boats illumining the sombre waves, and their ruddy gleam rivalling the blue gleams of the moon, until one day

it occurred to him that the sea had never had a poet of its own. No doubt Homer and Vergil have utilised it as a background for their characters, but they speak of it with timid respect rather than with genuine lyrical enthusiasm. The passages in which they allude to the "treacherous" and "sterile" element are not sea-scapes in the proper meaning of the word. Byron, who of all poets best loved the sea, has often addressed it in fine stanzas, and in his semi-serious epic, he has described a shipwreck with amazing truthfulness. The boat of Don Juan equals the Wreck of the Medusa, but Byron, any more than Delacroix, who drew such an admirable painting from the octaves of the noble lord, is not specially a painter of the sea. Autran desired to fill up this blank when he published in 1852 his "Poems of the Sea," in which he represents it under all its aspects, now luminous and serene, now dark and stormy, in a calm or in a gale, gilded by the sun, silvered by the moon, bearing on its waves a leaf from Vergil's bay wreath, or an orange of Sorrento, tipped by the sea-gull's wing, traversed by white sails of boats, lovely in its fluid and multiform beauty that ever changes and varies, and all this, not in the dry, didactic manner of the old descriptive poets, but with

a human soul mingled with the vast space and more vast than space itself.

In the preface to his book the author seems to have laid out his work for himself, a work which he carried on with a conscientiousness not always characteristic of poets. This is what he says: "In my opinion, there exist on earth three great, three splendid pursuits to which are due the honours of the Muse: agriculture, war, and the life of the seaman. Labourers, soldiers, and sailors, these are the primordial divisions of the human race; the three largest classes of our race of work, suffering, and glory are comprised in them."

The "Poems of the Sea" were soon followed by "Labourers and Soldiers;" so the three great categories of the human race have been sung in beautiful verse that has the luminous serenity of Laprade and the golden timbre of Méry's rimes. "Milianah" and "Rural Life," which form the continuation of "Labourers and Soldiers," show how the idea brought out in the poet's first volume has been adhered to by him.

It is the Romanticist school that has restored the sonnet, so long forsaken by poets. The credit of

doing this belongs to Sainte-Beuve, who, in the "Poems by Joseph Delorme," was the first to exclaim: —

"Laugh not at sonnets, O mocking critic!"

He himself wrote sonnets that are worth as much as long poems, for they are faultless; and since then this charming form, cut in facets like a crystal vial, and so admirably fitted to hold a drop of light or of perfume, has been attempted by a large number of the younger poets. It is noticeable, however, that Victor Hugo, the great maker of metres, the man who is familiar with every form, with every cadence, with every rhythm, has never written a sonnet. Goethe also long abstained from indulging in the sonnet, he and his fellow-eagle no doubt not caring to imprison themselves in that narrow cage. But Goethe gave way at last, and late in life composed a sonnet which made a sensation in German literature.

Of all the present day sonneteers, the cleverest workman, the most skilful chaser of that rhythmic gem, is Joséphin Soulary, the author of the "Humouristic Sonnets," printed in a way to delight bibliophiles by Perrin, of Lyons. The setting is almost as valuable as the diamonds it contains, and shows that one

has to do with precious things. Joséphin Soulary's sonnets, are, indeed, rare and exquisite gems of the greatest value; every pearl is of the finest orient, all the diamonds of the first water, all the flowers of the richest colours and exhaling the most suave scents.

At the beginning of his book, he compares his Muse to a lovely girl who encloses her lithe form within a close-fitting corset and a gown that sets off the shape it clings to. The thought put into the sonnet, which makes it more slender and makes the outlines firmer, does resemble the beauty who becomes more slight, elegant, and fairy-like, thanks to slight discomfort. Joséphin Soulary's talent, extremely concentrated, is an essence that has been repeatedly distilled and that combines in a single drop the savour and the perfumes that are scattered among other poets. He possesses in the highest degree conciseness, a close style; his verse is thorough; he knows how to reduce an image to an epithet, how to manage a bold ellipsis, and he exhibits subtile ingeniousness and skill in confining within the circumscribed space beyond which he may not venture, an immense number of thoughts, words, and details that would in other work require whole pages and prolonged periods. Those who like easy reading

and turn pages over with listless hand may think Joséphin Soulary's style somewhat obscure and difficult to make out, but the sonnet involves such skilled difficulty; Petrarca is not to be read as one runs, and from Italy, where men know how to value the sonnet, came to the poet a gold medal with this inscription: *Giuseppe Soulary le muse francesi guido ad attingere alle Itale fonti.*

I am well aware that, in times of exuberant literary fertility, a volume of sonnets is not much, yet I prefer to large libraries full of big books of melodramatic interest this delicate stand wondrously carved, that upbears silvern or golden statuettes thoroughly elegant and in exquisite taste, notwithstanding their small dimensions, ewers of agate or onyx, enamelled perfume boxes containing concentrated perfumes, precious Myrrhine vases opalescent with all the colours of the iris, and sometimes one of the lovely small lachrymatories in antique clay containing a tear turned into a pearl so that it shall not evaporate.

On the extreme confines of Romanticism, in a strange land lighted by a weird light, appeared, soon after 1848, a singular poet, Charles Baudelaire, the author of "The Flowers of Evil," a volume that created a

sensation such as does not usually herald the appearance of a book of verse. "The Flowers of Evil" are indeed strange flowers, unlike those of which nosegays are usually formed; they have the metallic colouring, the black or glaucous leaves, the curiously striated calyxes, and the intoxicating perfume of those exotic blooms the perfume of which may not be inhaled without peril. They have grown on the black loam of rotten civilisations, those flowers, which the poet seems to have brought back from India and Java, and which he cultivates in preference to lilies and roses, jasmine and forget-me-nots and violets, the innocent flora of small volumes bound in straw-yellow or pearl-gray covers. I must confess that Baudelaire lacks ingenuousness and candour; his is a very subtile, very refined, very paradoxical mind, and his inspiration is largely mingled with the critical spirit. His familiarity with Edgar Poe, gained by translating the works of that eccentric American genius, whom he was the first to introduce to the French, has exercised great influence upon his mind, naturally fond of deliberate and mathematical originality. Vergil produced Dante, and Edgar Poe, Baudelaire; the raven of the American poet seems at times to croak its incessant *Never — Nevermore!* in

the verse of the Parisian poet, for, although he travelled in India in his early youth, Baudelaire belongs to Paris, where he spent almost the whole of his life, and where he has just died, alas! still quite young. Like Edgar Poe, he believes in innate perversity. By perversity is to be understood that strange instinct that urges us, in spite of our sober reason, to commit absurd, hurtful, or dangerous acts for no other reason than that one ought not to do them; that gratuitous wickedness, that secret revolt which led the first woman, amid the joys of Paradise, to listen to the suggestions of the serpent, —a piece of perfidious counsel that humanity has but too well kept in mind.

On the other hand, the poet is not in the least indulgent to the vices, the depravation, and the abominations he describes with the coolness of an anatomical painter. He repels them as infractions of the universal harmony, for, in spite of his eccentricities, he loves order and the normal. Pitiless towards his fellows, he is no less severe towards himself; he tells of his own mistakes, his own stumblings, his own madness, his own perversity, with manly courage and without sparing the hypocrisy of the reader who is himself in secret a prey to similar vices. His disgust for mod-

ern wretchedness and ugliness fills him with a melancholy by comparison with which that of Young is jollity.

Although he loves Paris as Balzac loved it, although, in his search for rimes, he wanders through its most sinister and mysterious lanes at the hour when the reflections of the lights change the pools of rain water into pools of blood, and when the moon moves along the broken outline of the dark roofs like an old yellow ivory skull, though he stops at times by the smoke-dimmed windows of dens, listening to the croaking song of the drunkard and the strident laughter of the prostitute, or else under hospital windows to note the moans of the patients, whose pain, like his own, revives with the coming of gray dawn, yet very often a suddenly recurring thought takes him back to India, the Paradise of his youth, through a vista opened up by remembrance. Then, as in fairy plays, through a haze of gold and azure, are seen palm trees bending to the soft-scented breeze, brown faces that, with teeth showing in smiles, seek to relieve the master's sadness.

If on the one hand the artifices of Parisian coquetry delight the refined poet of "The Flowers of Evil,"

on the other hand he is passionately fond of exotic singularities. High above all the fancies, the infidelities, and angers in his work, stands out obstinately a strange figure, a Venus cast in African bronze, dark but beautiful, *nigra sed formosa*, a sort of Black Madonna, whose niche is always adorned with crystal suns and clusters of pearls. To her he returns after his excursions into the horrible, asking of her, if not happiness, at least sleep and forgetfulness. This wild mistress, mute and grim as the sphinx, with her scents that make men drowse and her caresses that hurt, seems to be a symbol of primitive life or of nature, to which tend again the aspirations of man when he is weary of the complications of that civilised life without which, it may be, he cannot get along.

Of course it is impossible, within the necessarily restricted limits of my work, to give a detailed summary of this most strange volume. The poet's talent for concentration has caused him to reduce each piece to a single drop of essence enclosed in a crystal flagon cut with many facets: essence of roses, of hashish, of opium, of vinegar, or of English salts that must be carefully drunk or breathed, like all liquors of exquisite intensity.

Let me quote "The Little Old Women," a singularly fanciful poem, in which the author discerns with melancholy pity, under the ravages of wretchedness, carelessness, or vice, traces of elegance, a certain faded charm, and as it were a spark of soul. One of the most remarkable pieces in the volume is called "A Parisian Dream." It is a splendid, sombre nightmare, worthy of Martin's mezzotint Babels. Imagine an unnatural or rather a magical prospect, composed of metal, marble, and water, from which vegetation is banished as out of place. Everything rigid, polished, shimmering under a moonless, sunless, starless sky. In the centre of eternal silence rise, glowing with inward fire, palaces, colonnades, towers, stairs, pumping-stations whence fall heavy cascades like curtains of crystal. Blue waters are set like steel mirrors of antiquity between quays or in basins of burnished gold, or flow under bridges made of precious stones. The liquid is set in the crystallised beams, and the porphyry slabs of the terraces reflect objects like mirrors. The poem is black and shiny as ebony. We are far indeed, in this short piece, purposely composed of factitious elements and producing effects contrary to the ordinary aspects of nature, from the artlessly sentimen-

tal poems and little May songs in which poets sing of the tender green foliage, the warbling of birds, and the smiles of the sun.

Baudelaire was of opinion that there came a time in art when all the great general feelings and what might be called the sublime commonplaces of humanity had already been expressed as perfectly as it was possible to express them by poets who had become classics. He believed that it was puerile to attempt to appear simple in the midst of a complex civilisation, and that it was absurd to pretend to ignore what one knew perfectly well; that the natural art of the great ages should be followed by a supple and complex art, which should be at one and the same time objective and subjective, which should investigate, be curious of knowing, seeking new terms in every dictionary, borrowing colours from every palette, harmony from every lyre, secrets from science, and analysis from the critics, in order to render the poet's thoughts, dreams, and postulates. These thoughts, it is true, have not the bloom of early youth; they are subtile, affected, smack of gongorism, are eccentrically deep, egotistically individual, turn on themselves like monomania and carry the seeking after novelty to the point of excess and paroxysm. If I

may borrow a comparison from the writer whose talent I am trying to define, the difference is the same as that between the harsh, white, perpendicular light of noon that presses down upon everything and the horizontal light of evening that makes the strangely formed clouds blaze with all the colours of molten metals and iridescent gems. Can it be said that the setting sun, because its tone is less simple than that of the morning, is a decadent sun, worthy only of contempt and anathema? It may be urged that its belated splendour, in which colours and tints are decomposed, set on fire, exacerbated and tripled in intensity, is about to sink into night. But has not night also, that causes millions of stars to shine, night, with its changing moon, its wild-haired comets, its aurora borealis, its mysterious shadows, and its secret terrors, is not night also possessed of merit and poesy?

I must ask leave, in order to complete this portrait, to borrow a passage from a study written by me some years ago, at a time when there was no reason to anticipate the death of the poet who has passed away in such sad fashion. I was expressing the impression produced upon me by "The Flowers of Evil" by

means of an analogy drawn from an American writer with whom Baudelaire must certainly have been acquainted : —

" In one of Hawthorne's tales, there is a description of a curious garden in which a botanist, who is also a toxicologist, has collected the flora of poisonous plants. These plants, with their strangely cut leaves of a blackish or glaucous mineral-green, as if they were dyed with sulphate of copper, possess a sinister and formidable beauty ; in spite of their charm, they are felt to be dangerous ; their haughty, provoking, and perfidious attitude betrays the consciousness of mighty power or irresistible seductiveness. Their blooms, fiercely striped and barred, of a purple colour resembling clotted blood, or chlorotic white, exhale bitter, intoxicating perfumes ; in their poisonous calyces dew is transformed into aqua tofana, and around them buzz only cantharides with their corselets of green and gold, and steel-blue flies whose sting causes carbuncles. The euphorbia, the deadly nightshade, the henbane, the hemlock, the belladonna, mingle their cold venom with the burning poisons of the tropics and of India. The manchineel displays its little apples, as deadly as those that hung from the tree of knowledge of good and evil ; the upas tree drops its milky juice which burns deeper than acid. Above the garden hovers a deadly vapour, which suffocates birds as they pass through it. Yet the doctor's daughter lives with impunity amid these mephitic miasmas ; her lungs breathe in without danger an atmosphere which to any one else than her father and herself would

be certain death. She makes necklaces of these flowers. She adorns her hair and perfumes her bosom with them, she bites their petals as maids nibble at the petals of roses. Slowly saturated with venomous juices, she has become herself a living poison; she neutralises all others. Her beauty, like that of the plants of the garden, has something weird, fatal, morbid about it. Her hair, of a bluish black, contrasts strangely with her complexion, dead pale and greenish, on which her lips show so purple that they seem to be stained by some sanguine berry; her strange smile reveals teeth set in dark red gums, and her fixed glance fascinates and repels. She looks like one of those Japanese women, vampires of love, diurnal succubæ, whose love exhausts in a fortnight the blood, the marrow, and the soul of a European. And yet she is a virgin, is the doctor's daughter, and languishes in solitude. Love seeks in vain to acclimatise itself in that atmosphere, out of which she herself could not live."

Long did Baudelaire's Muse wander about that garden with impunity, but one night, ill and weak, it died of breathing in the scent of these deadly flowers.

Next to Baudelaire may be set one who, like him, died a premature and regrettable death, Henri Mürger, the novelist of Bohemia, who is likewise one of the characteristic figures of that day. Mürger is entitled to figure in this book, for in spite of the difficulties of a life of adventures and work, he was a poet in his

leisure hours and bequeathed to the public a volume of verse, which was the last publication of which he read the proofs. No doubt, like all those who have begun by writing in prose, Mürger lacked that deep knowledge of rhythm which can be acquired through long practice only. He could not play upon the poetical keyboard with complete facility and freedom, but he made up for this by wit, taste, and feeling. He had the art of putting into his verse, as in his prose, an accent of emotion and raillery, a smile that has a tear in it, a sadness that seeks to be joyful and that tries in vain to forget, an intelligence ever deceived but never duped, that knows better than Shakespeare that frailty is woman's name. He is marked by a certain feminine and nervous grace which is wholly his own, and which must be credited to him. This particular touch prevails over the imitations of Alfred de Musset that are too evident in his book, in which there is one masterpiece, a tear that has turned into a pearl of poesy; I mean "Musette's Song," in which Mürger is to be found in full. The five or six stanzas sum up his soul and his life, his poetics and his talent.

Thomas Hood, the English humourist and caricaturist, carried away by a jovially funereal fancy, was one

day drawing a sketch of his own tombstone, on which he placed for sole epitaph the words:

"HE WROTE THE SONG OF THE SHIRT"

So on Mürger's tomb, upon which youth casts its last blooms, might be inscribed:

"HE WROTE MUSETTE'S SONG"

While I am on the subject of songs, let me point to the fact that they are not often met with in the new school, the art of Boufflers, Désaugiers, and Béranger being rather disdained by it as frivolous and trifling. The guitar has been set aside for the lyre, and Pierre Dupont himself aimed to write popular odes, poetic "Marseillaises." Yet the song is a thoroughly French form, just as French as comic opera and vaudeville. Gustave Nadaud has written a modern song kept within the limits of that style, and which nevertheless contains the new qualities of images, rhythm, and style that are indispensable to-day. He has written the music to his own words, and sings them with much taste and expression. The Muse of Song is a kindly wench that tolerates pleasantries and does not object to having her neckerchief rumpled, provided it be done with a light hand. Her rosy lips willingly enough sip from the

poet's glass in which sparkles the silvery foam of champagne. She replies to a risky remark by a frank burst of laughter that shows her white teeth and ruddy gums. But her gaiety has nothing unhealthy about it, and our ancestors took her in patriarchal fashion upon their knee. Now that the world is more corrupt, modesty is naturally more susceptible, and Gustave Nadaud had to make use of infinite art and discretion in order to preserve, in spite of such scruples, the liberty of the song, which needs a touch of freedom of speech, of real or feigned intoxication, and of sarcastic opposition. To songs in this vein, that derive from Anacreon through Horace and Béranger, Gustave Nadaud has often added others of lofty inspiration and exquisite feeling, that, but for the refrain he has affixed to them, might well be classed as odes. Quickly, however, he returns to the light, tender, witty, or comical tone that best suits his instrument; for Nadaud, after all, though a poet, is a true song-writer.

I have pointed out the four or five figures that recur of themselves to the memory and to the critic's pen in a census of poetry since 1848. Each has its own individuality, natural or acquired, that distinguishes it from the crowd without giving it an eminent

position. Each of these poets is admired within his own school and by a certain portion of the public, but not one of them has yet won the general notoriety that Time transforms into glory. This in no wise takes from their talent, which is unquestionable and which at any other time would have attracted attention. But it is unfortunately true that nowadays a man may publish two or three volumes of meritorious verse and remain absolutely unknown. That is the case with very many young fellows, possessed of ideas, feeling, grace, freshness, style, and remarkable skill for versification. They must wonder why nobody reads them, and the truth is it would be difficult to give a satisfactory answer. The public, full of other preoccupations and turning to scientific and historical researches, has left poetry to one side. Reviews no longer admit verse; the newspapers, which devote their best space to accounts of vaudeville, never notice it, and it is impossible to depict the startled look of a publisher asked by a youth to publish a volume of poetry. France seems to be satisfied with two or three poets, and the public mind is loath to burden itself with new names. Yet, below the recognised master, there are poets endowed with talent and genius even, whose work, if it

could be drawn from obscurity, would bear comparison with many a famous and oft quoted passage. It is dull work singing to deaf ears, but present day poets put up with it; although they are well aware that they will not be listened to, they go on riming for themselves and have given up trying to reach the public with their verse. They practice in silence, darkness, and solitude, like those pianists who practice during the night to make their fingers supple, but upon dumb pianos in order not to disturb their neighbours. Such worship of art, such absolute disinterestedness, such fidelity to poetry, which the new city seems resolved to banish from its midst as it was banished from Plato's Republic, without, however, sending it away crowned with flowers, cannot be too highly extolled. So-called practical minds may feel contempt for the dreamers who follow the Muse into the woods, who spend a whole day seeking the fourth rime in a sonnet or the final line in a tercet, and return home at night satisfied with having written a few lines many times altered on their note-book; but these practical people will not have known the poet's pure delight, — the contemplation of nature, the aspiration to the ideal, the bringing of beauty out of the hard form of verse, so difficult to

work out, and which is, as it were, the marble of thought. Yet is it not a worthy and a noble use of the time that men now look upon as money?

Having spoken of young poets, let me open a volume edited by them under the title of "The Contemporary Parnassus," which is a sort of anthology to which each one has contributed a flower. In this nosegay of spring blooms, some few roses of a past season have been admitted, for I appear in it in company with Émile and Antoni Deschamps; but this is merely a kindly act of remembrance on the part of young fellows making their first appearance in the arena and hailing the veterans, who ought, perhaps, to lay down the cestus as did Entellus. The tone of the book is wholly modern and fairly enough represents the present state of poetry. Leconte de Lisle, the central sun of that poetic system, around whom revolve quite a number of stars set on high, to say nothing of certain vagabond comets influenced for a time but soon returning to their vast ellipse in the deep blue sky, — Leconte de Lisle has five or six pieces that suitably indicate the different aspects of his talent. "The Jaguar's Dream" is one of those pictures of tropical nature that he paints in such strong colours. "The Verandah," a sort of sestina,

in which certain rimes recur like refrains, has all the charm of an incantation; "Ekhidna" breathes an archaic and grim Hellenism. Ekhidna, the monstrous and superb daughter of Kallirhoé and Khrysaor, shows at the entrance to her grotto, in order to attract men, her head with its fascinating beauty, her arms whiter than those of Here and her bosom fair as marble of Paros, while in the darkness of the cave her scaly body drags over the bones, polished like ivory, of the lovers she has destroyed. "Hjalmar's Heart," a poem full of Scandinavian savagery, in which the hero, who is dying on the field of battle, calls upon the raven to pluck out of his bosom his bleeding and smoking heart and carry it to Ymer's fair daughter, seems to have been written by a Valküre, while "The Prayer for the Dead," a Vedic hymn filled with deep religious solemnity, would win the approval of the richis and mounis of India, who sit on panther-skins between four braziers.

A little farther are sonnets by Louis Ménard, who is no less an admirer of the genius of Greece than Leconte de Lisle himself. Ménard, who is a scholar, a painter, and a poet, is among moderns one of the men who have best understood Hellenism and penetrated within that sweet and charming civilisation in which

man blossomed out in his full beauty among gods like unto him. Among these sonnets there happens to be one called "Nirvana," in which the author breathes forth his longing for eternal rest and divine nothingness, like all those who are born out of due season, who are weary of the struggles of a life in which they feel no interest, and who are haunted by the nostalgic remembrance of a lost ideal fatherland. Louis Ménard was evidently intended to share in the conversations on Cape Sunium and in the groves of Academe. He is a Greek born two thousand years too late, and when I saw him for the first time, he made me think of that last priest of Apollo whom Julian met in a small demus of Attica, and who was on his way to sacrifice upon the half ruined altar of his god, fallen into desuetude, a goose— for want of anything better.

In "The Gods in Exile," Banville fills an old Druidical forest with the gods that have been driven from Olympus, treating seriously the poetic theme that Heinrich Heine, with his tender scepticism and his mocking sensibility, had treated more lightly. Jupiter, who is once more Zeus, in conformity with the terminology adopted by Leconte de Lisle, is not now a dealer in rabbit-skins in a little island in the North Sea,

and he does not talk old Homeric Greek to sailors from Syra, as the German humourist pretends he does. He is sadly leading beneath the oaks, that no longer, like the grove of Dodona, give forth oracles, the company of ejected Olympians, who express their grief in superb verse, the finest Banville ever wrote.

Catulle Mendès, after having imitated and exaggerated in his own way the Alfred de Musset of "Mardoche," "The Chestnuts," and the "Ballad of the Moon," not as a mere pupil, but as a master already skilful, quickly wearied of his rackety style and his poetic impertinences. He calmed down and, as the saying is, diluted his wine with water. But the water he used was that of the Ganges, and a few drops of the sacred river sufficed to still in the poet's cup the sparkling of champagne. A pandit brought up in Leconte de Lisle's school, he now explains the mysteries of the lotus, sets Yami and Yama talking, sings of the child Krishna and of Kamadeva in verse of wondrous perfection of form, in spite of the difficulty of setting in rhythms the great Hindoo names that resemble those enormous jewels that adorn the housings of elephants. "The Mysteries of the Lotus" are not particularly clear, but obscure things often cast a shadow upon words, and there can

be nothing but praise for the skilful manner in which the tercets of the poem move along in regular order, like the billows of the sea of Amrita, on which floats Purusha on a bed the dais of which is formed by the thousand heads of the serpent Secha, sunk in reverie and watching the mystic lotus springing from his navel. It strikes me that the weird Hindoo mythology, with its many-armed gods, its avatars, its cosmogonic legends, and its inextricable mysteries, as dense as the jungle, is, in spite of all the talent with which it is used, difficult to acclimatise in our poetry, which is somewhat narrow for these immense displays of form and colour.

In the same collection are grouped François Coppée, the author of "The Reliquary," — a charming volume that holds out and fulfils hopes, — Paul Verlaine, Léon Dierx, Auguste Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, José Marie de Heredia, whose Spanish name does not prevent his writing very beautiful sonnets in our tongue, Stéphane Mallarmé, whose deliberate extravagance is relieved now and then by poetic flashes, Albert Mérat, who has a sonnet, "Violets," as sweet-scented as its name, Louis Xavier de Ricard, Henry Winter, Robert Luzarche, — in a word, a whole company of young poets of the eleventh hour, who are dreaming, seeking, trying,

working with all their soul and all their might, and who have at least the merit of not having despaired of an art which the public seems to be forsaking. It would be exceedingly difficult, unless I made use of numerous quotations, to give an idea of the manner and characteristics of these young writers, who have not yet quite freed their individuality, and who still seem somewhat uncertain in their aims. Some of them imitate Leconte de Lisle's serene impassibility; others, Banville's harmonious breadth; some, Baudelaire's hard concentration; and some, the grim grandeur of Hugo's later manner, each one, be it well understood, while preserving his own particular accent that mingles with the borrowed sound.

Alfred de Musset, who but some years back moulded more than one talent, does not appear to have much influence over the present generation. Young poets consider him too careless, too free, too poor a rimer, and, why should I not say it, too sensitive, too easily moved, too human, in a word. Self-possession is the fashion nowadays.

A few new "Flowers of Evil" of Baudelaire's bloom out strangely in the centre of the collection, like black roses, and are known at once by their intoxicating scent. "The Jet of water," "The Mala-

braise," "Far Away," and "Bertha's Eyes" show that the poet who has set "in the heaven of art a strange deadly ray and a new shudder" can be also, when it pleases him, a graceful poet, not, it is true, of soft and vague grace, but of that strange, mysterious, and fascinating grace that seduces refined minds.

The present period, though apparently so careless of poetry, is in point of fact so full of poets, or at least of clever verse-makers that if I were to name them all, I should produce a list as long as those in Homer, Rabelais, or Cervantes when Don Quixote tells Sancho Panza the names of the illustrious paladins he believes he sees, through the clouds of dust, in the flock of sheep.

One of the youngest of the new-comers is Sully-Prudhomme, who has already marked himself out from his companions by his easily recognised physiognomy, free from contortions and grimace of originality. In his first volume, dated 1865 and called "Stanzas and Poems," every piece, down to the smallest, has this in its favour, that it is composed, that it has a beginning, a middle, and an end, that it has an aim and expresses a definite idea. A sonnet, like an epic poem, has to be planned, and the most difficult thing to compose, in

poetry as in painting, is a single figure. Many authors lose sight of this law in art and their works consequently suffer, for neither perfection of style nor richness of rimes redeems such a fault. At the very outset of this book one comes upon a charming poem, so novel in conception and so delicately wrought that it is impossible to praise it too highly. It is typical of the poet and is entitled "The Rift in the Vase." A beautiful crystal vase, in which is placed a bouquet of vervain, has been lightly struck by a fan, an almost unnoticeable blow that nothing has betrayed, yet the rift, finer than the slenderest hair, is spreading and growing. The vase, meanwhile, appears to be intact, but forbear to touch it, for it would fall to pieces. Its invisible wound is ever bleeding. This is, in truth, Sully-Prudhomme's poetry, — a crystal vase in which is placed a flower and from which the water steals like a tear. The stanzas beginning, "Custom is a stranger," contain an ingenious idea and end with manly advice directed against that apparently humble housekeeper whom no one notices and who ends by becoming the mistress of the house, after having expelled youthful liberty. I have not space to indicate all the remarkable poems in this book; I should have to

take each piece separately, for Sully-Prudhomme's inspiration varies greatly and it is difficult to give a general idea of it. Beams of light, breaths of air, sounds, colours, and forms incessantly modify the poet's state of mind. He hesitates between diverse systems: now he is a believer, now a sceptic; to-day he yields to illusion, to-morrow he is disenchanted; he blesses love and he curses it, he exalts art or nature, and, vaguely pantheistic, he mingles in the universal soul of things. He is sorrowful without weakness, and through his uncertainty one recognises a firm will that is soon to assert itself. A second volume, consisting wholly of sonnets, fulfils every promise held out by the first. In it the poet has set a loftier and deeper thought in a form that henceforth he handles like a master; he can no longer complain, as he does at the close of "Stanzas and Poems," of the powerlessness of his art and compare himself to a musician whose lyre plays him false, or to a sculptor whom the clay refuses to obey. While Sully-Prudhomme usually confines his subjects to small dimensions, he is quite able to undertake great frescoes. "The Stables of Augeas," which are to be read in "The Contemporary Parnassus," are wrought with the firm stroke, the simple tone, and the

breadth of style of a mural painting. The poem might take its place with the other labours of Hercules upon the cella or pronaos of a Greek temple. I am of opinion that if Sully-Prudhomme keeps resolutely on for a few years and does not give up poetry, forsaken by the public, for prose or any other profitable occupation, he is destined to take the first place among our eleventh-hour poets, and that he shall be rewarded as if he had set to work with dawn.

Less of a new-comer than Sully-Prudhomme, Louis Ratisbonne occupies an important place in poetical literature; he is a man capable of hard work and of inspiration. In this age of hurry, when men avoid undertaking lengthy works, unless it be some endless novel thrown off in instalments day by day, it takes astonishing courage, patience, and enthusiasm to translate into verse, with a scrupulous care that does not exclude elegance, the whole of the "Inferno" in the "Divine Comedy," from the first circle to the last. Ratisbonne has proved himself to possess such courage and patience; while still quite young he joined himself to the group of Vergil and Dante and descended into the gloomy depths with them. This sort of hard work is the best possible practice for a verse-maker who

desires to develop his muscle and to become a formidable athlete in the Olympic games of poetry. The one danger to be guarded against is retaining for good and all the grim and proud attitude of the sovereign master whom one has copied, and to remain, like Michael Angelo, after he had painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, with hands and eyes upturned to heaven. It is a risk one loves to run, and Louis Ratisbonne has escaped it. His own original poems are not clouded by the smoke of Dante's Hell; on the contrary, they have a grace, a freshness, and even at times a coquetry that in no wise recall the translator of the old austere Ghibelline. They are charming love poems that, in their simple way, like to adorn themselves from time to time with Shakespearian conceits, and like Goethe's Marguerite to try before a small mirror the jewels left on the table by Mephistopheles. Ratisbonne's Muse, however, does not allow herself to be tempted; she quickly puts back the seducer's gems within the casket, in order to remain what she is, an irreproachable virgin, and to write, with a pen that seems to have been made from the feather plucked from an angel's wing, the chaste and naïve repertory of "The Child's Comedy," a collection that mothers read over

their children's shoulders, and that fathers carry into their study, delighted with an art that conceals itself. Louis Ratisbonne was chosen by Alfred de Vigny, that swan of poetry, to be his literary executor, and he published that writer's last poems. This is the greatest praise that can be accorded to his character and his talent.

In 1852 A. Lacaussade published his "Poems and Landscapes," that were "crowned" by the Academy. Tropical nature, often described but rarely sung, lives again in these landscapes, which are almost all drawn from Mauritius, the poet's native place, in one of the loveliest parts of the Indian Ocean. What the author of "Paul and Virginia" did in prose, Lacaussade thought he might try to do in verse. He confines himself within his island, as willingly as Brizeux does within his Brittany. He has made himself its filial poet; he tells lovingly of its prospects, its heavens, its savannahs, its aspects, now gloomy, now bright; he borrows from it the setting and the background of his pictures. The pieces which seem to me to exhibit most plainly his earlier inspiration are those entitled "Remembrances of Childhood," "The Limit Field," "Cape Bernard," and especially "The Bengali."

A few years later, the poet, far from his enchanted isle, and saddened by nostalgia of blue skies and the bitter experience of life, brought out another book that bears a title expressive of discouragement, — "Wreckage;" as if these lines, that so well deserve to reach port safely with all sail set and with a favouring breeze, had been cast ashore, among the wreckage of ships in some unknown shipwreck. I can understand that on the passage his vessel may have been the sport of the gale, that, in order to lighten it, perhaps, the master may have had to throw overboard many a precious object, but I cannot admit that the ship itself went down. The poet's sadness is a manly sadness; it stands up against grief while accepting it with stoic calm, and does not allow itself to indulge, even at the darkest moments, in that enervating melancholy that softens the soul and deprives it of spring. The courageous idea of duty prevails over passing despair, and the contemplation of nature calms the moral sorrows of the poet. Lacaussade's talent is full of a gentle gravity, of virile resignation, and of a sort of austere charm that is more easily felt than defined. Not only has the poet felt what he sings, he has experienced it, lived it, and his disenchantment is no mere comedy of grief. In

every book there is one piece or passage that sums up the character of the work, and Sainte-Beuve cleverly pointed out the one in which is best heard the note characteristic of Lacaussade. It bears a quaintly pretty title, — "The Roses of Forgetfulness," hybrid flowers the name of which is not to be found in any botanical list, but which are quite in their place in the garden of poesy.

To his "Modern Songs" Maxime Ducamp has prefixed a very remarkable preface, in which the author, with courageous sagacity, seeks to ascertain the causes of the indifference of the public to poetry, instead of merely bewailing the fact. He discovers several such causes: lack of great beliefs, of enthusiasm for noble ideas, lack of passion and human feeling. He adds other reasons: real or deliberate ignorance of life at the present time, of the marvellous inventions due to science and industry, obstinate retrogression into the past, the turning back to old symbols and worn out mythologies, the doctrine of art for art's sake, puerile care for form without regard to thought, — in a word, all the reproaches that can be heaped upon poor poets who cannot help themselves.

Then he endeavours to apply his theories, and in

doing so expends much talent, energy, and will. If inspiration is frightened away by a subject that is too modern or too refractory, he forces it and drags from it verse that has at least the merit of being sober, correct, and well turned. He sings the wonders of matter, of the electric telegraph, of the locomotive engine, the dragon of iron and fire. While reading this piece, which is unquestionably well written, I remembered a painting by Turner which I saw in London, and which represents a train rushing at full speed along a viaduct in a tremendous storm of wind and rain. It is a cataclysm, absolutely. Blazing lightning, wings like those of great birds of fire, Babel cloud-towers falling in ruins under the thunderbolts, downpours of rain turned to spray by the gale, something that seems to be the setting of the end of the world. And through it all the locomotive engine, its glass eyes glaring red in the darkness, writhing like the dragon in Revelation, and dragging after it, like an immense tail, its vertebræ formed of carriages. It was unquestionably a sketch dashed off with mad fury, confounding earth and sky with a single stroke of the brush, a perfect piece of extravagance, but the work of a madman of genius. It would perhaps be possible to extract poetry at less cost

from the steam-engine, which our writers fail to admire adequately, but the poem which Ducamp has devoted to the iron steed that is to take the place of Pegasus, would be all the better for a little of Turner's disorder and fantastic effects.

Fortunately a number of delightful pieces have found their way into the "Modern Songs." They are variations upon the three old themes, beauty, nature, and love, which have hitherto sufficed for poets who care little for novelties. Maxime Ducamp is always most successful when he departs from the programme he has laid out for himself; the proof of this is to be found in "Love Sonnets," "Turkish Women," "Life in the Desert," and especially in "The Demolished House," in which a sorrowful remembrance sits on the ruins in the attitude of Albert Dürer's angel, and recalls in harmonious stanzas the joys, the griefs, the losses, and the peaceful hours of study that have been sheltered in those walls now falling under the pickaxe. Allowing for the difference in proportions, this poem represents the "Sadness of Olympio" in this book.

Regardless of Maxime Ducamp's theories, poetry concerns itself uncommonly little with the present, and keeps on looking back to the past instead of gazing

upon the future. André Lefèvre's "Pan's Pipe" is a proof of this. His inspiration is purely that of antiquity, and a breath of the great god Pan fills the reeds of his unequal pipe. A short preface of two pages, from which I quote the following lines, sums up the æsthetic beliefs of the author, and gives a clearer view of his character than I can: "Whether they be serene meditations or passionate plaints, idyls of antiquity or love poems, all the pictures here brought together, no matter how varied the subject and the style, are linked together by my belief in the life of things. My inspiration has come to me from without, and if there remain any part of my old self in my work, if the objects I have touched preserve an almost human look, it is because the mind unites with what it embraces and penetrates what it animates. It seeks in vain to be but an echo; it must ever be an interpreter. Sometimes I describe solitary scenes, woods, mountains, and seas left to themselves; sometimes I have set within a small frame ideas half transformed into images; sometimes again, young and lovely women appear on the edge of a wood and sport to the sound of invisible pipes, but no matter what the colour or what the face may be, it is nature, living as hours and

seasons have made it; nature, the enchantress which presides over the birth of flowers, the involuntary upspringing of amorous instincts; the consoler that soothes and appeases unsatisfied desire; the Cybele of antiquity, in a word, on whom the Greeks bestowed so many different names, so many divine faces."

It will be seen that André Lefèvre is, in poetry at least, frankly pantheistic. Forms continually emerge from the matrix of matter only to drop back into it ere-long and to rise from it again. In the mould of ideas matter in fusion flows and hardens until the contours can no longer contain it. The universal soul passes from the mineral to the plant, from the plant to animal, from the animal to man. Prodigal life fights with miserly death that calls for the elements it has lent her, and unconscious nature remains silent, for it is voiceless and can only echo the voice of man, or of humanity rather.

The world is like Prometheus the Titan; the funereal vulture picks at its ever-renewed liver. Life and death are but the recomposition and the decomposition of forms that, under the veil of colour, undergo unending metamorphoses, and Spinoza's eternal matter is leavened, in the ceaseless fermentation, by the perpetual

"becoming" of Hegel. The poet develops these thoughts with wondrous force of style and quiet grandeur, truly worthy of antiquity. In his verse images cling to philosophical thoughts and hang upon them like draperies that allow the form they hide, and the contours of which they caress, to be guessed at. He clothes abstractions in shimmering colours; everything palpitates, shines, moves, and even the shortest poems are animated by the mighty swarming of nature in labour. Even when he treats of such subjects as Leda and Danaë, the poet, going beyond the mythological fact, discovers a cosmogonic meaning in the fable. Danaë, a captive in her brazen prison, is earth locked in the frozen embrace of winter waiting until the golden beams rain down upon her to fertilise her. Leda is humanity uniting with nature, and from that hymn is born Helen, that is, perfect beauty. It may be that these are somewhat subtile interpretations, but they are in no wise repugnant to the genius of Hellas, and as they do not in the least impair the clearness of the lines or the charm of the colouring, as, besides, myths though they are, Leda and Danaë remain none the less exquisite figures that Greek sculpture would gladly admit, and which shine with the sparkling whiteness of the

marble of Paros, the poet can hardly be reproached with being too ingenious. Even now, André Lefèvre, it seems to me, may be put down as a star of the first magnitude in the poetic Pleiades of the present day.

After "Pan's Pipe" André Lefèvre published "My own Lyre," a second volume in which his inspiration, freer, more personal, and less confounded in the great whole, has warmed up and acquired colour like Pygmalion's statue when the marble flushed with the tints of flesh. "My Own Lyre" equals, if it does not surpass, "Pan's Pipe," and its chords respond as readily to the poet's touch as the reeds joined with wax breathed harmoniously at his lips.

Recently he brought out a metrical translation of the "Bucolics," and by way of contrast included in the same volume a translation, also in verse, of a Sanscrit poem by Kalidasa, "The Messenger Cloud," than which no subject was better fitted to attract André Lefèvre's descriptive pen. His skill enables him to disport himself amid comparisons borrowed from a nature and manners entirely novel and even foreign to European readers. By bringing together in the same book Vergil and Kalidasa, Latin antiquity and Hindoo antiquity, he enables us to enjoy comparative

literature, while at the same time he usefully employs his admirable talent for versification. It is impossible to turn poetic leisure to better account.

Emmanuel des Essarts, although he has already published two or three volumes of verses, "Elevations" and "Parisian Poems," and is now at work upon another, — some fragments of which have appeared in literary reviews under the somewhat peculiar title "Idyls of the Revolution," — is none the less quite young and a very recent new-comer. His poetic talent is served by knowledge acquired through hard study, and I am not of those who believe that knowledge harms inspiration; on the contrary, it is a pinion that aids the poet to soar above the crowd. Brought up in the knowledge of Greek and Roman antiquity, des Essarts mixes it in happy proportions with the most recent modernity. At times the fashionable dress worn by his Muse in "Parisian Poems" has tunic-like folds and recalls chaste Greek statues. Antique beauty fitly corrects the merely pretty, and prevents its turning into coquettishness. A drop of the old mythological nectar occasionally falls within his glass of champagne and prevents its sparkling too much. It is desirable to encourage such exceedingly difficult

poetic attempts, which call for the most delicate taste, to bring back to poetic form the things of every-day life, our manners, our habits, our entertainments, our black-coated sadness, our melancholy in ball-gowns, the beauties we like and whom we admire on the stairs of the Opera, to whom we present Parma violets, to whom we address sonnets, and with whom, in a word, we are in love. Artists are constantly reproached with not drawing their inspiration from their own times, and with seeking in the past subjects they might readily find around them did they only take the trouble to look. But routine has such a hold upon us that the smallest familiarly modern detail, though readily accepted in prose, shocks us in verse. Byron's dandyism and sarcasm have to be exaggerated if it is desired to make the public accept reproductions of the life it sees every day, even if these pictures are set in gilt frames and hung upon splendid walls. Mundane elegance yields with difficulty to the exigencies of rhythm, and it is to the credit of des Essarts that he has compelled it to do so without depriving it of any of its freedom or its grace. He never finds verse resist him; he does as he pleases with it, and he is a millionaire of rich rimes. In

"Elevations" the author is free to spread wings of lyricism that would be scorched in the flame of drawing-room tapers; he soars in the blue, driving the swarm of strophes before him, and alights on the lofty summits only.

If on the one hand Emmanuel des Essarts' "Parisian Poems" take us to balls, on the other Theuriet's "The Road to the Woods" takes us back to the country, and it is wise to follow him under the leafy shade where he wanders as did melancholy Jacques in the forest in "As You Like It," passing remarks upon the trees, the flowers, the grass, the birds, the flying deer, the charcoal burner seated on the threshold of his hut of branches. Theuriet is delicate, discreet, and somewhat shy; his work is filled with the coolness, the shadows, and the silence of the woods, while the figures that enliven his landscapes glide by noiselessly over the mossy carpet, remaining in the memory and appearing against a background of verdure, gilded by a slanting sunbeam. There is in Theuriet something that recalls the tender earnestness and soft grace of Hégésippe Moreau's "The Farmer's Wife."

Next to Theuriet, in order to keep the tone intact, might be mentioned Auguste Desplaces, a delightful

poet who, terrified by the bustle of Paris, long since took refuge in the district of Creuse, and who has occasionally published in *l'Artiste* some exquisite poems, the joy of the cultured; elegies dreamed or felt and rimed at leisure in solitude. I do not know whether these poems, known to true amateurs of poetry, have been collected into a volume and have thus reached a wider public.

Many a page have I already written, yet my task is far from done. I shall have to be satisfied with merely mentioning the verses of André Lemoyne, so tender in sentiment, so delicately and artistically wrought; the poems of Gustave Levavasseur, so Norman in flavour, and from which many a flower might be culled for an anthology; those of his friend Ernest Prarond; the versified romances of Valery Vernier; the small pieces of Eugène Grenier, so often "crowned" by the Academy; Armand Renaud's "Love;" Glatigny's "Creepers" and "Golden Arrows," many a one of which flies high and far, as an illustrious critic has said; Alfred Busquet's poem of "The Hours;" Philoxène Boyer's "Two Seasons," in which the eloquent orator of the Quai Malaquais, who is at the same time a true poet, has told of his joys, alas! too few, of his sorrows,

and of his resignation; Nicolas Martin's "Mariska," the work of a man at once German and French, on whose talent falls a bluish beam of the Teuton moon; and the poems of Auguste de Châtillon, painter, sculptor, and poet, whose verse might at times be mistaken for old ballads or old popular songs, so true are they in feeling and so artless in form.

Of a different kind are Eugène Manuel's "Intimacies," which were "crowned" by the Academy; the poems of Stéphane du Halga, who sings of Breton nature with the feeling of Brizeux and the swing of Alfred de Musset; Thalès Bernard's idyls; the rustic pictures of Max Buchon, who is a sort of Courbet in poetry, a thorough realist and also very true, which is not the same thing; the "Donaniel" of Grandet, who appears to have attended the school of Mardoche, Hassan, and Rafael, the gentleman of France; the clever and graceful poems of Alphonse Daudet, Bataille, Amédée Rolland, and so many others that the list might be indefinitely prolonged.

The farther I proceed with my task the more complex does it become and the more difficult to carry out. As I study my materials I come upon works that I do not know, names with which I am unacquainted or

imperfectly acquainted, though they deserve to stand out in the fullest light; but they are so numerous that it would take many volumes to give even a bald idea of them. Three or four shelves of my library are laden with volumes of verse published within the last few years, and the collection is far from being complete.

Let me be permitted to make a comparison. You have left the town in order to think undisturbed; you enter a small wood the outer trees of which show at the far end of the plain. Across the grass, seldom traversed, there is a narrow path which you follow and by the side of which, at the foot of the oaks, and half hidden under the withered leaves of last autumn, you can smell the violets. In the branches that sway and whisper in the breeze, you hear the warbling of some invisible bird that flies off as you draw near and which you catch sight of as it wings its way rapidly to some other shelter. You pick a few violets, you note the bird's song, and you pursue your walk. Soon the wood changes into a forest; clearings open up like verdant drawing-rooms; the springs babble between the mossy stones and form mirrors in which the deer come to gaze at themselves. The violets grow bolder and ask to be picked; your little bouquet becomes a

sheaf of bloom to which you add the silver bells of the lily of the valley, the pretty rose heath, and all the wild flora of the woods. From the trees, the bushes, the thickets, from the depths of the forest rise innumerable voices singing together, the song of the bullfinch, of the goldfinch, of the robin red-breast, of the chaffinch, of the wagtail, of the blackbird, of the tomtit, and over all, jays and magpies calling dissonantly in the general harmony. By dint of attention you succeed in making out the part taken by each bird in the concert, you distinguish its peculiar note, its trills and runs; you can give a name to each of the flowers in your already huge bouquet. But the forest holds innumerable birds whose song you have not heard, for they sing at another hour or in thickets to which no path leads. Violets as pure, as fresh, as sweet-scented as those of which your bunch of bloom is composed, grow in solitude on banks where no human eye sees them. They fade in silence and mystery without their perfume having been ever inhaled by any one. Meanwhile evening comes on, and feeling fatigued, you say to yourself: "Since I cannot reckon up all the birds and all the violets, I shall award the prize to the nightingale and the rose." Soon the nightingale breaks

out in an amazing burst of notes that shatters the silence like musical fireworks, but, as it is taking breath, another nightingale begins, and its song is no less lovely; then a third, equally talented, commences in its turn. You go to the rose bush, but the rose is not alone; it is surrounded with companions as beauteous as she, to say nothing of the young buds that have not as yet undone their green velvet corsets. Night has fallen. In the distance rolls by, with long streamer of smoke and strident whistle, a railway train. The travellers are returning to the town; not one of them has thought of stopping in the woods where sing the birds and bloom the violets. But, after all, has not humanity something else to do besides listening to songs and breathing in scents? Yet pity 't is that so many lovely things should go to waste! Well, poetry is prodigal, like nature.

Now, as I am drawing to a close, I notice an omission in my work. I have not spoken of women poets. Mmes. Desbordes-Valmore, Amable Tastu, Delphine de Girardin, Anaïs Ségalas, belong to a previous period, but the lyre is still struck by women's hands, and the office of the Tenth Muse is still well filled, although the number of priestesses has diminished greatly, the

novel quickly drawing to itself those ladies who have a vocation for verse.

Mme. Ackermann, who, it seems to me, deserves at this moment to wear the Muse's golden bays, is the widow of a distinguished philologist, and reads Greek and Sanscrit poems in the original text. The volume she has published under the title "Tales and Poems," contains both translations and original pieces. She belongs neither to the Romanticist school nor to that of Leconte de Lisle; she goes farther back, and her familiar verse, which readily lends itself to all the digressions of the tale, recalls somewhat the dreamy kindliness of La Fontaine. This is a note infrequently heard nowadays, and which fills one with pleasant surprise. However, if Mme. Ackermann is related to the seventeenth-century writer, she is wholly of her own times in the feeling that inspires the poems in which she speaks in her own name. She belongs to the school of the great melancholy poets, Chateaubriand, Byron, Shelley, Leopardi, those eternally sad geniuses who suffered from the woe of life, and whose inspiration is always sad. Their disappointments, the bitterness they have endured, the weariness they feel, they veil under a faint, forced smile, for their sorrow has its

pride, and Lara and the Giaour do not lament in commonplace fashion. But it is plain from the subjects that Mme. Ackermann loves to treat, — endless sleep, eternal night, Death the Deliverer, — that, like the Italian poet, she has learned to taste the charm of death. She dreads remembrance because it renews suffering. A very competent critic, Lacaussade, thus spoke of her: "There is lofty inspiration in some of her poems; for instance in 'The Unfortunates,' in which the weariness of life is superbly expressed. The spirit of the great elegiac poets of our day makes itself felt in this poem by a contemporary.

"Painful scepticism, philosophical doubt, protests of the conscience against the riddle of life, the inextricable mingling of good and evil, revolt of the reason crying out despairingly, —

'He who was almighty willed that pain should be,' —

all the anguish of the soul, are expressed in beautiful verse in Mme. Ackermann's 'Prometheus.'"

Mme. Blanchecotte has a very different poetical temperament. She won the approval of the Academy for her first book, "Dreams and Realities." A pupil of Lamartine, she has preserved the master's lyrical form and movement, and has added to them a deep,

individual accent that recalls Mme. Valmore. Like her, Mme. Blanchecotte often breaks out into vehement bursts of passion of the most poignant sincerity; real tears choke her utterance, and she may say truthfully, "My poor lyre is my soul itself."

Born in an obscure and poor station in life, she has risen from it by dint of persevering efforts. She is really self-made. A worker through necessity, she managed to find time to educate herself to a degree not often attained by women. She knows English, German, and Latin even, she is widely read, and, in a word, has so strengthened her intellect that she is in no danger of yielding to the impulse of her heart. She has written in good prose moral pages that prove that, though an elegiac poet, she can observe as well as feel. Béranger thought highly of her, and Sainte-Beuve has a high opinion of her character and her talent. She is Lamartine's friend, and a constant visitor to his sad and lonely hearth. It is worthy of note, for the fact is uncommon, that Mme. Blanchecotte collaborated in the publication of the "Quatrains of Khayam," a Persian poet whose lyrical mysticism is more highly wrought even than that of Hafiz and Sadi. She it was who read the proofs.

Nor is this all; French poets are not found in France alone. Ancient Armorica still has bards and Provence troubadours. Brizeux, the author of "Marie," is also the author of "Leiz-Breiz," a volume of verse in pure Celtic. Quite recently, a Breton, M. Luzel, who sings in the tongue of the bard Guiclan, published a number of local legends of which I can appreciate the poetry only by means of the parallel translation. Of course I miss the merits of the style and of the structure of the verse; in order to enjoy these properly one has to be a descendant of the Kymri, a lad of Morbihan or Cornwall, with great breeches and long hair.

The mother tongue of Southern France is the "langue d'oc" that was spoken by King René, and in which Richard Coeur-de-lion and Frederick of Hohenstauffen rimed their "sirventes." This tongue, which did not amalgamate with the French as did the "langue d'oïl," but remained faithful to its origins, provided a great poet in the full strength of his genius with an admirable instrument. Every one knows I mean Mistral, even people who know the particular idiom he employs as little as they do Italian, Spanish, or Portuguese. Everybody has read "Mireïo," that poem filled with sunshine and blue sky, in which the

scenes and manners of the South are painted in such warm and luminous colours, in which love speaks with the same passionate candour as in an idyl of Theocritus, in a dialect that in sweetness, harmony, rhythm, and richness, is in no wise inferior to Greek and Latin. Its success was greater than any one had dared to hope for a book written in a tongue unknown to most readers. Frédéric Mistral, who knows French also, added to the original text an excellent translation, so that almost all the charm of the original was preserved, as in those *Lieder* of Heinrich Heine's which he translated himself. "Calendau" is a legend drawn from the history of Provence, and, considering the way it is told, the interest of the episodes, the brilliancy of the pictures, the grandeur and life-likeness of the characters, and the heroic swing of the style, deserves to be called an epic.

Like Tommasso Grossi and Carlo Porta de Milan, the author of "The Vision of Prina," proclaimed by Stendhal the finest piece of modern poetry, like Baffo and Buratti of Venice, who had the honour of striking the key-note for Byron's Beppo and Don Juan, Mistral is unfortunate enough to be a great poet in a tongue that, unhappily, is understood but of a small

number. It is true that he himself does not look at the matter in that light, for he holds that French is circumscribed within eight or ten of the central departments, while in some thirty others it is Basque, Spanish, Celtic, German, Walloon, Italian that are spoken, to say nothing of the dialects, while on the other hand Provençal, or the "langue d'oc" is spoken by fifteen millions of men.

Next to Mistral it is only right to place Aubanel, the author of "The Half-Open Pomegranate," whose verse is as ruddy and fresh as the rubies that show through the open golden skin of that eminently Southern fruit.

III

IN this study I have confined myself to the figures of the new men, assigning to them an important place, for they it was whom I had first to make known. But meanwhile the masters of song themselves have not been silent. Victor Hugo has published "Contemplations," "The Legend of the Ages," and "Songs of the Streets and the Woods," three volumes of mark, in which are met with again, but developed in unexpected ways, the qualities that were admired in his "Orientales" and "Autumn Leaves." The "Contemplations" mark the beginning of Victor Hugo's third manner, for poets are like painters in that there are easily recognised phases of their talent. The assiduous practice of art, the constant teaching of life, the changes in temperament due to age, the broadening of the point of view, all these causes combine to impart a particular aspect to works according to the time at which these have been produced. Thus the Raphael of the "Sposalizio," of the "Belle Jardinière," and of the "Madonna with the Veil" is not the Raphael

of the Loggie of the Vatican and of the "Transfiguration." The Rembrandt who painted the "Lesson of Anatomy" does not much resemble the Rembrandt of the "Night Watch," while one would scarcely suspect in the Dante of the "Vita Nuova" that Dante who wrote the "Divine Comedy."

While the genius of other masters becomes bent, weak, and wrinkled with years, age seems to add new strength, new vigour, and fresh beauty to that of Hugo. He grows old in lion fashion; his brow, furrowed with august wrinkles, bears a longer and thicker mane, more formidably wild than of yore. His brazen talons have grown, and his yellow eyes resemble suns in a cavern. When he roars, all animals remain dumb. He may also be compared to the oak that o'ertops the forest; the huge, rugged trunk sends out in every direction branches as thick as ordinary trees and curiously twisted; its deep-plunging roots draw sap from the heart of the earth, and its head almost touches the high heavens. At night the stars shine through its mass of foliage, and in the morning it is alive with the song of birds. It resists heat and cold, wind, rain, and thunder; the very strokes of the lightning merely add a splendid grimness to its beauty.

In the "Contemplations" the part entitled "Of Yore" is bright as the dawn, and that called "To-Day" is richly coloured like the sunset. While the edge of the horizon is lighted up with a blaze of gold, topaz, and purple, cold violet shadows grow at the extremities; there is more darkness in the work, and through the obscurity the sunbeams flash like lightnings. More intense black brings out the well placed lights, and each sparkling point flames in dread fashion like a cabalistic microcosm. The poet's saddened soul seeks deep, mysterious, sombre expressions, and seems to be listening, in the attitude of Michael Angelo's "Pensiero," to the words of "The Shadow Mouth."

Regret has often been expressed that France possesses no epic poem. It is a fact that Greece has the Iliad and the Odyssey, Rome the Æneid, Italy the Divine Comedy, Orlando Furioso, and Jerusalem Delivered, Spain the Romancero and the Araucana, Portugal the Lusiad, and England Paradise Lost. Over against this we can set the "Henriade" only, truly a meagre feast, for the poems of the Carlovingian cycle are written in a tongue that scholars alone can understand. Now, however, if we do not yet possess a regular epic poem in twelve or twenty-four cantos, Victor Hugo has at

least given us the small change of one in the "Legend of the Ages," a currency struck with the effigies of every epoch and of every civilisation upon medals of gold of the purest metal. The two volumes comprise, as a matter of fact, a dozen epic poems, concentrated, rapid, and condensing in a small space the aspect, the colour, and the character of an age or of a country.

As one reads the "Legend of the Ages" one seems to be wandering in a vast cloister, a sort of *Campo Santo* of poetry, the walls of which are covered with frescoes painted by a marvellous artist who is familiar with every style, and who, according to the subject he has chosen, passes from the almost Byzantine stiffness of Orcagna to the Titanic boldness of Michael Angelo, representing with equal skill knights in plate armour and nude giants swelling their invincible muscles. Each picture gives one the living, lifelike, deep impression of a vanished age. Legend is history, with its innumerable artless and picturesque details, seen through the imagination of the people, with its fancy portraits that are truer than real portraits, its exaggerated characters, its swollen heroism, and its fabulous poetry taking the place of science, which is often merely conjectural.

The "Legend of the Ages," in the mind of the

author, is but a partial cartoon of a colossal fresco which the poet means to complete, unless the mysterious breath extinguishes his lamp in the middle of his work; for here below no man can be sure of completing what he has begun. The subject is man, or humanity rather, traversing the various environments due to barbarism or relative civilisation, and constantly progressing from darkness to light. This thought is not expressed in philosophical and declamatory fashion; it springs from the very essence of things. Although the work is unfinished, it is nevertheless a complete whole. Each period is represented by an important and characteristic picture, and one that is always absolutely perfect in itself. The fragmentary poem proceeds first from Eve to Jesus Christ, and the Biblical world is revived in scenes of the highest sublimity and of a richness of colouring unequalled by any painter. It is enough to mention "Conscience," "The Lions," and "The Sleep of Boaz," incomparable in beauty, breadth, and grandeur, and written with the inspiration and the power of the prophets. "The Decadence of Rome" reads like a chapter from Tacitus turned into verse by Juvenal. But now the poet had assimilated the Bible; now, in order to paint Mahomet, he so fills

himself with the Koran that he might pass for a son of Islam, for Abu Bekr or Ali. In the part he has entitled "The Christian Heroic Cycle" Victor Hugo has summed up, in three or four short poems such as "The Marriage of Roland," "Aymerillot," "Bivar," "Twelfth Night," the vast epics of the Carlovingian cycles. They are as mighty as Homer and as simple as a child's book. In "Aymerillot," the legendary figure of white-bearded Charlemagne stands out in heroic kindliness among the twelve peers of France, drawn as sharply as the effigies carved upon funeral slabs and as richly coloured as stained-glass windows, while the whole of the proud, feudal familiarity of the "Romancero" lives again in the poem called "Bivar."

The semi-fabulous heroes of history are succeeded by the heroes of fiction, just as the epic poems were followed by the romances of chivalry. Knights-errant start on their travels in search of adventures and of wrongs to be righted; they are masked justices, steel-clad spectres, dreaded equally by tyrants and wizards. With their lances they slay imaginary and real monsters, wizard steeds, or traitors. Barons in Europe, in Asia they are lords of some strange city with golden domes and saw-like crenellations. They are always

returning from some distant journey and their armour bears the marks of the claws of the lions they have crushed to death in their arms. Eviradnus, to whom the author has devoted a whole poem, is the most admirable personification of knight-errantry, and might justify Don Quixote's craze, so great, courageous, and good is he, and so constantly ready to take the part of the weak against the strong. Most dramatic is the way in which he saves Mahaud from the snares spread for her by big Joss and little Zeno. In his description of the manor of Corbus, half ruined and whelmed by the winter gales and rains, the poet has obtained symphonic effects which it might well have been thought were unattainable to speech. The verse moans, swells, storms, and roars, like Beethoven's orchestra; through the rimes one hears the howling of the wind, the lashing of the rain, the swishing of the bushes on the top of the towers, the falling of the stones into the moats, and the low roar of the sombre forest that clasps the old castle and seeks to stifle it. With the sounds of the tempest mingle the plaints of the spirits and the ghosts, the vague lament of things, the terror of solitude and the yawn of desolation. It is the finest musical composition ever performed upon a lyre.

The description of the hall in which the Marchioness Mahaud, according to the custom of Lusace, is to spend the night before her investiture, is not less wonderful. The double line of ancestral suits of armour, placed upon horses covered with steel, shield on arm, lance in rest, wearing huge morions, and seen at times in the darkness of the gallery in a lightning flash of gold, steel, or bronze, has a spectral, formidable, heraldic aspect. The eye of the poet seer separates the phantom from the object, and mingles the chimerical and the real in that due proportion which is poetry itself.

In "Zim-Zizimi" and in "Sultan Mourad" we are shown the East of the Middle Ages with its fabulous splendour, its shimmering of gold and its phosphorescence of carbuncles against a background of murder and conflagration, with strange peoples come from places of which geographers scarce know the names. The conversation between Zim-Zizimi and the ten white marble sphinxes, crowned with roses, is sublimely poetical. The weary King puts his questions, and Nothingness replies with hopeless monotony with some ghostly tale.

Perhaps the most striking and splendid passage in the whole book is that which forms the opening part

of "Ratbert." Of all poets Victor Hugo alone was capable of writing it. Ratbert has summoned to meet upon the square at Ancona, for the purpose of discussing a proposed expedition, his most illustrious knights and barons, the flower of that heraldic and genealogical tree that feeds on Italy's poisoned sap. Each one shows out in proud attitude, drawn with a single stroke from his crest to his armed heel, with his coat of arms, his titles, his connections, his characteristic point summed up in a single word or a single hemistich. The sonorous syllables of their splendidly strange names, squarely set in the verse, sound like trumpet blasts, and pass by in the magnificent march past with a sound of arms and spurs.

There is no one who knows the worth of names as well as Victor Hugo; he always manages to discover strange, sonorous, characteristic ones that mark the bearer and remain ineffaceably imprinted in the memory. The song of the "Adventurers of the Sea" is a striking example of this power. The rimes send back to each other, as a shuttlecock is sent back by the battledores, the quaint names of these scourers of the main, escaped convicts drawn from every land, and a single name is sufficient to describe from head to foot any one of

these picturesque rascals with a port like that of the figures in Salvator Rosa's sketches or Callot's etchings.

An astonishing poem too is the one in which the Renaissance is characterised and which bears the title "The Satyr." In this mighty pantheistic symphony the poet's sov'ran hand strikes every one of the chords of the lyre. Gradually the poor bestial man of the woods, whom Hercules has carried up into Olympus by the ear and who is compelled to sing, becomes transfigured by the splendour of inspiration and assumes such colossal proportions that the Olympians are terrified; for the shapeless satyr, a god but half emerged out of matter, is none else than Pan, the great Whole, whose ancestors are but partial incarnations that shall once again be reabsorbed into his mighty bosom.

Then there is that painting that seems to have been wrought out with Velasquez' brush, "The Infanta's Rose." Marvellous is the feeling of Spanish Court life and etiquette! How plainly is the little Princess seen in her childish gravity and her early consciousness that one day she is to be a queen; in her stiff silver cloth skirt embroidered with jet, she watches the wind carrying off one after another the petals of her rose and scattering them upon the dark surface of the pond,

while, pressing his brow against the pane of one of the windows of the palace, is seen the wan face of Philip II, thinking of his distant Armada, a prey mayhap to the gale and destroyed by the same wind that scatters the petals of the flower.

The volume ends in Biblical fashion with a sort of apocalypse. "The Open Sea," "The Broad Heavens," "The Trump of the Last Judgment" are each and all poems that treat of the time that is not. In them one catches a glimpse of the future far down one of those flaming openings that the genius of poets manages to make in the unknown, a sort of tunnel full of darkness at its mouth but showing at the other extremity a brilliant point of light. The trump of the Last Judgment that awaits the end of all things and meanwhile holds within its vast brazen crater the terrific call which is to wake the dead in every valley of Jehoshaphat, is one of the most amazing inventions of the human mind. It might have been written in Patmos, with an eagle for desk, in the hallucination of prophecy. Never have the inexpressible and yet unthought been reduced to the forms of inarticulate speech, as Homer says, in more splendid and masterful fashion. It really seems as though the poet had

heard and noted down the mysterious whisperings of the infinite in that region where there is neither contour nor colour, neither darkness nor light, neither time nor space.

The "Songs of the Streets and the Woods," as the title indicates, mark the occurrence in the poet's career of a sort of period of rest and, as it were, of the vacation of genius. He leads the spirited steed, by comparison with which the classical Pegasus is but a quiet cob, and that the Alexanders of poetry alone can ride, to the green fields of the idyl, there to graze upon pastures fresh and flowers new. But it is hard for that dread courser, wild-maned, with fiery nostrils, hoofs that strike stars instead of sparks, and that leaps from one of the summits of the ideal to another amid storms and thunders, —it is hard for that courser to stay still, and one cannot help feeling that were it not hobbled, it would return, with a few strokes of its mighty wings, to the giddy summits and the bottomless abysses. While his terrible steed is turned out to grass, the poet indulges in all manner of delightful fancies. He turns back the course of time and becomes young again. He is no longer the sov'ran master, admired of all men, but the youth who, wearying of his small chamber, strays

through the streets and the woods in pursuit of maid and butterfly. Any girl and any site is good enough for him; Meudon is a Tivoli, and Jane is an Amaryllis. The washerwomen answer very well for Leda in the reeds, and the geese will do for swans, while the cheap wine of Argenteuil tastes like nectar in the coarse glasses of the tavern. The poet's imagination transforms everything and lights up the paunch of the vulgar pitcher with a sparkle of ideal.

In this volume Victor Hugo has forsaken the Alexandrine verse and all its pomp, making use of verses of seven or eight syllables and of short stanzas. But wonderful is the execution! Never has the poetic scale been played upon by a hand at once lighter and mightier. The most perfect rhythmical difficulties are overcome one after another with incomparable ease and grace. Liszt, Thalberg, and Dreyschok are nowhere beside him. Then, at the end of the volume, the poet springs on his steed and with a touch of the spur flies off into the infinite.

From beyond the tomb Alfred de Vigny holds out to us in his shadowy hand his volume, "Destinies," the finest of his works, I fancy, in which there is a masterpiece of proud sorrow and stout-hearted melancholy, —

the poem called "Samson." The Hebrew Hercules is well aware that he has been betrayed by Delilah, and, disgusted with the courtesan's petty tricks, voluntarily allows himself to be caught in the net that he could, did he wish it, break with a single effort. But why should he do so? Does not a man's love ever bring about deceit in woman? —

"Woman, sickly child, infinitely impure!"

As well be done with it all at once. Never have the satiety of heroism and the weariness of strength been rendered in such magnificent verse.

The republication of Sainte-Beuve's work has brought to light additional poems by the learned critic, which are exquisitely charming and rarely delicate. Auguste Barbier, the writer of the "Iambics" appears in the "Sylphs" in the light of a fresh, graceful poet entering upon his career unaware that he is famous, and who sings of love and nature as though he were but twenty years old, while Alfred de Musset adds to his works a few poems in which beats his ever sensitive heart, and which are written with his customary cavalier grace.

A poet who, while still young, had played a lofty

part, the part of a precursor, and who succeeded in introducing naturalness and freshness into poetic forms that, until he came, seemed to dread those very qualities, Lebrun, the author of "The Cid of Andalusia" and the "Poem of Greece," proved, by publishing a complete edition of his works in 1858, that even as early as the times of the First Empire there were many efforts made to reach those green oases of poetry discovered since then, and that he was one of the first to divine them, as sailors divine the approach of land by the sweet-scented breath of the gale.

And now what conclusion is to be drawn from this lengthy work? Of a truth it would be hard to say. Which of all the poets whose work I have examined shall write his name in the glorious consecrated way like Lamartine, Victor Hugo, Alfred de Musset? Time alone can tell.

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